

THE CALVINIST-EVANGELIST PREACHER

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## **ABSTRACT**

The seeming paradox between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelize has been a source of frustration and confusion for pastors and preachers since the early years of the church. By studying what the Bible has to say about both doctrines and examining the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the author seeks to encourage pastors and preachers to teach sound doctrine regarding God's sovereignty and to be on mission as a mouthpiece for sinners to hear the gospel and be saved. The pastor is not called to compartmentalize theological truths into logical conclusions. Rather he is to let the Bible speak and then relay that message to those that God has put under their care.

## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### NEW CALVINISM?

In 2009, *Time magazine* featured a story called the “10 ideas that are changing the world right now.” The subheading of the article was “The global economy is being remade before our eyes. Here's what's on the horizon.” The ten ideas included things like: “Jobs are the new assets,” “Recycling the suburbs,” “Reinstating the interstate,” and “Africa, business destination.” To most people’s shock, tucked into these “10 ideas” was “The New Calvinism.”

What does Calvinism have to do with changing the world... at least as far as *Time Magazine* is concerned?

David Van Biema wrote:

Calvinism is back, and not just musically. John Calvin's 16th century reply to medieval Catholicism's buy-your-way-out-of-purgatory excesses is Evangelicalism's latest success story, complete with an utterly sovereign and micromanaging deity, sinful and puny humanity, and the combination's logical consequence, predestination: the belief that before time's dawn, God decided whom he would save (or not), unaffected by any subsequent human action or decision.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently *Time Magazine* saw this “comeback” of Calvinism as a force big enough to devote nearly 600 words to in their March edition.

According to *Time Magazine*, the revitalization of Calvinism was due to a few, younger, outspoken voices, such as Mark Driscoll and Albert Mohler. The revived interest had brought the theological conviction new life and new popularity.

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<sup>1</sup> David Van Biema, “The New Calvinism,” *Time Magazine*, March 12th, 2009, 50.

*Time Magazine* had a point. The Acts 29 Network, a staunchly Calvinistic church planting organization started by Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, has alone planted over 400 churches, all Calvinistic, in the last ten years. When added to the tens of thousands of people that attend Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church, Driscoll's Mars Hill Church, and Keller's Redeemer Presbyterian Church, not to mention the millions that listen to their sermons online every week, there is quite a movement.

Dave Hunt, an Arminian apologist noticed, much to his dismay, the momentum of Calvinist Theology as well; noting in his book, which is intended to turn people away from Calvinism:

I had scarcely given Calvinism a thought for years. Then suddenly– or so it seemed to me– in the past two years Calvinism begin emerging as an issue everywhere. Perhaps I am just waking up, but it seems to me that this particular doctrine is being promoted far more widely and aggressively now than I was ever aware in the past.<sup>2</sup>

## THE PROBLEM

Some pastors and theologians have embraced Calvinism or evangelism, without the slightest concern for the necessity of both. This phenomenon is not only true now, but has been true throughout history. The problem appears when pastors start using “their logic” over “theo-logic;” when pastors start thinking “logically” over and in place of thinking “theologically.”

Is it acceptable for Calvinistic preachers who esteem the Doctrines of Grace to neglect evangelism? The difficulty often rests in the logic. Kevin DeYoung says

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<sup>2</sup> Dave Hunt, *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God* (Sisters, OR: Loyal, 2002), 15.

that the concern of some towards this doctrinal coexistence “makes some logical sense, but it is not biblical logic.”<sup>3</sup> All we want is a logical answer. All we want is for everything we learn about God in Scripture and everything God commands in Scripture to fit together in perfect harmony.

If God is totally sovereign over man’s salvation, from predestination before the foundation of the world, to calling people by the Holy Spirit, to preserving them until his or her day of glory, then why are we commanded to share the gospel with unbelievers as if we could play a part in the process? Isn’t God going to save whom He wants? If so, then should anyone waste time getting involved? Questions like these have led many to choose a logical approach over a theological approach.

Many pulpits today are absent of anything resembling a plea to sinners to repent and believe. We have pastoral conferences today, where speakers teach staunch Calvinistic theology that is completely void of any teaching, encouragement, or exhortation to evangelize to the lost. The 2012 *Together For the Gospel* conference is a perfect example. Nine, well known and highly influential preachers spoke in an arena holding thousands of pastors and preached for an hour each. Of these nine, only one exhorted and encouraged pastors to evangelize to the lost. Only one spoke of God’s plan to save people from every tribe and nation. Only this one man, David Platt, used his hour to call pastors to do the work of the gospel.

The Bible teaches the Calvinistic doctrines of grace and simultaneously teaches the responsibility to evangelize. We have the great privilege of living in the

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin DeYoung, “Does Calvinism Discourage Evangelism?,” The Gospel Coalition, April 2010, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2010/04/16/does-calvinism-discourage-evangelism/>.

tension of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. A problem arises, however, when pastors and theologians start thinking of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility as opposing powers. Spurgeon was once asked how he could reconcile these two opposing doctrines and he responded, "I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together."<sup>4</sup>

This thesis will seek biblical answers to the concerns that arise from these two seemingly paradoxical doctrines. Also, the works of scholars, commentators and pastors, both past and present, will be examined for further comprehension.

Chapter two will assess the biblical validity of divine sovereignty over salvation and man's responsibility to evangelize. Included will be an investigation of the antinomy between the two biblical truths.

Chapter three will include extra biblical commentary on the study. Also included will be an historical look at the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was both a staunch Calvinist and also consumed with evangelistic fervor.

Chapter four will consist of a syllabus and lesson plans for a seminar that I taught at Mars Hill Church in Phoenix. The seminar includes three hours of teaching. There were over 30 pastors in attendance and the purpose was to encourage pastors and preachers that their call is to teach sound doctrine and evangelize. All of the attendees present were either pastors or pastors in training.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, (Pasadena, TX: Pilgram Publications, 1976), 44:402.

Chapter five will be a brief report of my teaching experience. It will include feedback from students and my insights and recommendations from the student's feedback. This feedback will allow me to make suggested revisions to my lesson plans.



## **Chapter 2**

### **THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of this thesis-project is to provide resources and design a class that will persuade and encourage undergraduate Bible College and Seminary students, that the biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God over salvation and the command to evangelize are both biblical truths. The goal is to train preachers; both present and future, to make a difference in the world for Jesus Christ by teaching sound biblical doctrine while also inviting all people to believe in Jesus.

Before examining the extra-biblical literature that has been written on the subject this chapter will look at the biblical and theological framework of these two doctrines. This chapter will first look at the passages that teach the Calvinistic doctrine of God's sovereignty, and then will look at the evangelistic commands in Scripture, and lastly a passage from Paul that helps merge the gap between these two seemingly paradoxical doctrines.

#### **PASSAGES USED TO SUPPORT DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY OVER SALVATION**

This section is not meant to be exhaustive, but will focus on the primary passages of Scripture that provide evidence for God's sovereignty in salvation. This section will examine five passages that support the Calvinistic (Reformed) doctrine of Election and two passages that are used to support the Arminian (Non-Reformed) view.

## **Matthew 22:14**

**“For many are called, but few are chosen.”**

Jesus had just come in His famous Triumphal Entry, teaching and correcting the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Daniel Doriani summarizes this section of Jesus’ ministry:

Jesus then told three parables that describe the way he saw the temple and its leaders. The parable of the two sons compares the leaders to a man who promises to serve his father, then goes off and does nothing (21:28-32). The parable of the tenants compares Israel to tenants who are given a perfect vineyard, then refuse to pay the rent and attempt to seize the property by beating and killing the owner’s representatives. Finally, they incite one another to disinherit and slay the owner’s son, just as the leaders soon disinherited and killed Jesus (21:33-46). In this parable, people are invited to a royal banquet, then refuse to come.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that these parables are harsh toward the religious leaders. “These parables do not merely condemn Israel’s leaders, they express dismay over their rejection of Jesus, their long-expected Redeemer and King.”<sup>2</sup>

The intensity of Jesus’ words toward the religious leaders should not be surprising, considering:

For three years Jesus had been preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom, which included proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world. He had been offering Himself and His Kingdom to the people of Israel, His own people, the chosen people of God. But at the end of those three years, all but a handful of Jews had rejected Him. Although Jesus had always been popular with the masses wherever He ministered, their acceptance of Him was for the most part superficial and selfish.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew: Vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 280.

<sup>2</sup> Doriani, *Matthew*, 280.

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), 304.

The area of interest for this thesis is verse 14, which says, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” After Jesus makes the point that He has invited everyone, and that they continue rejecting Him, His summary is packed with theological significance. It would be easy, if Jesus had negated these last words, to assume that His point was that everyone had a genuine and equal salvific call to salvation, but that some rejected it. However verse 14 gives us the key detail of His point; He tells us why people reject Him.

It is important to look at the difference between the words “called”(κλητοί) and “chosen” (ἐκλεκτοί). They might seem interchangeable in use and meaning, but it is obvious that Jesus is making a distinction between them in His parable. He says that many are “called,” then uses the conjunction “but” to signify separation and space between what comes next, “few are chosen.”

“κλητοί” can mean called, invited, welcomed, or appointed. This is a common word in the New Testament, particularly in Jesus’ teachings, as Schmidt points out, “καλέω is found in almost all the NT writings. It is particularly common in Luke and Acts. That this should be so in these more historical works is perhaps due to the fact of its widespread use. It is fairly common in Matthew, but less so in Mark, perhaps because there are fewer sayings of Jesus in Mk.”<sup>4</sup> In Light of the frequency of usage in the New Testament, we should be careful to understand the meaning and the differentiation between it’s denotation and that of “ἐκλεκτός.”

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “κλητός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 494.

“ἐκλεκτοί” carries the idea of choosing or selecting. It seems that both could give the idea of appointing and selecting<sup>5</sup>. There is however a clear distinction between these two terms in the gospels:

In the gospels, there is a distinction between the *klētoí*, the called ones, and the *eklektoí*, the chosen ones, relative to both service (Matt. 20:16) and salvation (Matt. 22:14)... Here the *klētoí*, the called, are those who have received the invitation to enter Christ’s kingdom, and the *eklektoí*, the chosen ones, are those who have obeyed the call. “Many are called, but few are chosen.”<sup>6</sup>

However it is not so in the Epistles:

Generally, in the epistles, *hoi klētoí*, “the called,” are the *eklektoí*, “chosen” (Rom. 9:24; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; 1 Pet. 2:9, *génos eklektón*, a chosen generation [génos {1085}, generation, offspring, stock]), those whom God “called out of darkness into His marvelous light.” *Klésis*, with Paul and Peter, is more than an invitation; it is an invitation responded to and accepted, and it is so because “the called [hoi klētoí]” are already “the chosen [the eklektoí]”.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding these two words clarifies Jesus’ argument. Barbieri explains His argument this way, “While the kingdom had now been expanded to include individuals from all races and backgrounds (“many are invited”), there is an election (“few are chosen”). And yet individual response is essential.”<sup>8</sup> D.A. Carson agrees and adds:

The *gar* (“for”) introduces a general, pithy conclusion explaining the parable. Many are invited; but some refuse to come, and others who do come refuse to submit to the norms of the kingdom and are therefore rejected. Those who remain are called “chosen” (*ekletoi*), a word implicitly denying that the

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<sup>5</sup> Sprios Zodhiates *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2000), 545, Logos.

<sup>6</sup> Zodhiates, 545.

<sup>7</sup> Zodhiates, 545.

<sup>8</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 71.

reversals in the parable in any way catch God unawares or remove sovereign grace from his control.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus' message to the religious leaders is that those who do not reject Him and His Father, but accept the invitation, are those who have been "chosen" to do so. Not all agree that this is Jesus' message. Some see Jesus' parable as a lesson in human responsibility and decision. Ben Witherington cautions, "Lest we think this has something to do with predetermination or predestination... The chosenness of the first group was conditional on their response to the king's invitation."<sup>10</sup> MacArthur agrees that human responsibility exists, but disagrees that God's sovereign choice is absent. "That phrase reflects the scriptural balance between God's sovereignty and man's will. The invitations went out to many, representative of everyone to whom the gospel message is sent. But few of those who heard the call were willing to accept it and thereby be among the chosen."<sup>11</sup>

MacArthur also adds, "Those who are saved enter God's kingdom because of their willing acceptance of His sovereign, gracious provision."<sup>12</sup>

It seems as though Jesus' teaching is that everyone receives an outward call to salvation, but only those who are chosen accept the call. "That is, many hear the outward call to God and many appear to respond, but God chooses only some of them to enter his eternal heaven. We know who these are by a profession of faith

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<sup>9</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 8: 457.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 409-10.

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, 312-313.

<sup>12</sup> MacArthur, 312-313.

that is verified by a godly life.”<sup>13</sup> Paul quotes Hosea in Romans 9 and points out that God determined long ago that He would call many people who were not His own, “those who were not chosen, as an outward call. “As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living GOD.’”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus’ summarizing statement indicates that God has generally and outwardly called everyone to accept His offer of forgiveness, but that He has only allowed the “chosen” to accept that forgiveness. This would suggest that God is in complete control over salvation. He not only invites, but also chooses who will accept and who will reject the invitation.

#### **John 6:44**

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

At this point in the book of John, Jesus has just entered into the “second stage” of His earthly ministry:

The Festival Cycle now moves into the second stage. In this chapter the evangelist introduced his second major “inclusio,” which runs from the beginning of chapter 6 with the identification of Passover (6:4) to the conclusion of chapter 11 with the announcement that Jesus’ final Passover was near (11:55).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Doriani, 287.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 9:25-26 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 249.

This stage is characterized by many public discourses, most of which are in the presence of Jews and religious leaders. The first of these teachings, and the first of the seven “I am” statements, is when Jesus calls Himself “the bread of life.”

The Apostle John records (John 6:1-15) the story of Jesus feeding five thousand people. He miraculously took five loaves of bread and two fish and provided enough food for everyone with food to spare. This miracle, as usual, started much controversy.

Jesus then left to spent time with His disciples where He walked on water, as another proof that He was divine. The crowds followed Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in hopes of learning more and specifically in search for more signs. These are the same people who had just witnessed His miracle of the feeding of the five thousand the day before. When Jesus saw them He challenged them to focus on spiritual things rather than just physical miracles. Blum explains Jesus’ rebuke this way: “He rebuked them for their materialistic motivation and their lack of spiritual perception. They saw miraculous signs, but to them it was only an easy meal. They failed to see what it signified.”<sup>16</sup> Jesus then told them that He could give them food that endures to eternal life.

The seekers, not understanding Jesus’ premise, ask the question “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”<sup>17</sup> Jesus responded by telling them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”<sup>18</sup> Borchet notes:

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<sup>16</sup> Edwin A. Blum, “John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 295.

<sup>17</sup> John 6:28 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> John 6:29 (ESV)

The interplay between working and believing is crucial to the concept of salvation in John. On the one hand, a person cannot earn acceptability with God by working for it. On the other hand, acceptability with God cannot be on the basis of “belief” in a mere theological formulation about God. Thus the noun “faith” (*pistis*) does not occur in John’s Gospel. He chose instead to use only the verb “believe” (*pisteuein*), and he almost equated it with “obey” (cf. 3:36).<sup>19</sup>

The people’s response is to be expected; they wanted a sign, proof that He really is God, and then they would believe. The Jews looked to the miracle as an example of God giving His nation a sign from Heaven that He is God. “Jesus was ready to counter their response. They had called for a sign like that of receiving manna from Moses, and in support they had used a scriptural proof text: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus, then said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of GOD is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”<sup>21</sup> The Jews said exactly what Jesus wanted them to say; “Sir, give us this bread always.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus then spoke His famous “I am the bread of life” words. Jesus says that “whoever comes to Him” will have eternal life.

At this point Jesus was clearly concerned with teaching the Jews about eternal life. He set them up to ask the right questions so He could answer the most important questions. The context of verse 37 is important in understanding what He says in verse 44.

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<sup>19</sup> Borchert, 262–63.

<sup>20</sup> Borchert, 262–63.

<sup>21</sup> John 6:32–33 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> John 6:34 (ESV)



"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."<sup>23</sup> He is not just the source of eternal life, but declares that the Father is in complete control over who will come to Him. "The coming of disciples to Jesus is here described as a gift of the Father. For all the Christological emphases in this Gospel, it remains uncompromisingly theocentric."<sup>24</sup> Jesus taught that unless the Father "gives" them over to salvation, they would not "come". This is good news; if the Father didn't actively "give" souls to "come" to Jesus, then no one would ever "come." Leon Morris says it this way, "People do not come to Christ because it seems a good idea to them. It never does seem a good idea to sinful people. Apart from a divine work in their souls people remain more or less contentedly in their sins."<sup>25</sup>

Jesus was confident that His Father was in control of salvation and that man's hardness of heart could not frustrate His Father's will. D.A. Carson adds:

Already the answer is provided here: however many people do not believe, God's saving purposes cannot be thought to be frustrated. Jesus' confidence does not rest in the potential for positive response amongst well-meaning people. Far from it: his confidence is in his Father to bring to pass the Father's redemptive purposes: All that the Father gives me will come to me. Jesus' confidence in the success of his mission is frankly predestinarian.<sup>26</sup>

The Jews didn't like Jesus' response to their questions. He not only said that He was the bread that comes down from Heaven, like some new and better manna, but also that He was confident that those the Father gave Him would come to Him.

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<sup>23</sup> John 6:37 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Borchert, 265.

<sup>25</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 325.

<sup>26</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 290.

"So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven?'"<sup>27</sup> Morris summarizes their attitude this way:

Jesus' words were not what the crowd expected or wanted. They rebel against the claims implied in what he said, feeling that they know very well who he is. In the face of this Jesus emphatically repeats what he has said, and takes the thought a stage further by speaking of the bread that he will give as his flesh.<sup>28</sup>

The Jews were not merely in disagreement with Jesus, but were opponents and enemies of Jesus' message. Borchert says, "Those who had been conversing with Jesus were not merely uncommitted people in general but in fact his opponents."<sup>29</sup>

Jesus then spoke words that require close examination. "Jesus answered them, 'Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.'"<sup>30</sup> His point in verse 44 is the same as in verse 37. Morris says, "Then he repeats the saying of verse 37, but in a slightly stronger form. Now he says that no one 'can' come unless the Father draws him."<sup>31</sup> Boice adds, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me (vv. 36, 37). This implies that no one can come, apart from a special act of God on his behalf, but it does not say this negatively. Now Christ does. 'No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.'"<sup>32</sup> D.A. Carson has a similar observation:

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<sup>27</sup> John 6:41-42 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> Morris, 327.

<sup>29</sup> Borchert, 267.

<sup>30</sup> John 6:43-44 (ESV)

<sup>31</sup> Morris, 328.

<sup>32</sup> James M. Boice, *The Gospel Of John*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 204.

“The thought of v. 44 is the negative counterpart to v. 37a. The latter tells us that all whom the Father gives to the Son will come to him; here we are told that no-one can come unless the Father draws him.”<sup>33</sup> Carson also says, “The combination of v. 37 and v. 44 prove that this “drawing” activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call “prevenient grace” dispensed to every individual, for this “drawing” is selective, or else the negative note in v. 44 is meaningless.”<sup>34</sup> Carson’s argument is that the combination of the positive statement (everyone will come who the Father wants to come) with the negative statement, (no one can come unless they are drawn by the Father), proves that God is only calling some in a salvific way and those whom He calls in this specific way will come.

Ben Witherington, an Arminian scholar, argues, “It is true to say that none come to Jesus unless the Father draws them, but we are not told on what basis or for what reason God draws or leads some and not others in this way.”<sup>35</sup> Any attempt to negate the teaching of divine sovereignty in this text on the basis of not having all the information of why God does what He does, leads to an exhausting and unfruitful task. The fact that God draws some and not others is explicit in this text. Many scholars, as noted above, think that the combination of verses 37 and 44 make it impossible to see anything but divine sovereignty as the teaching of this text. Witherington does not include any notes on John 6:44 in his commentary on the Gospel of John, simply ignoring the positive and negative statements of verses 37 and 44 and the argument of divine sovereignty that arises.

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<sup>33</sup> Carson, 293.

<sup>34</sup> Carson, 293.

<sup>35</sup> Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary On The Fourth Gospel*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 158.

Walls and Dongell comment, "The fundamental issue of this passage is not that of predestination but of Christology and the unity of the Father and the Son."<sup>36</sup> While the main thrust of John 6 is about Christology and unity of the Son and the Father, it doesn't negate the obvious soteriological teaching. The main thrust of John 6 being Christological in nature does not render the obvious soteriological teaching meaningless or insignificant.

Albrecht Oepke says that the basic meaning of the word ἔλκω is "to 'tug' or 'draw' (with material object: Jn. 18:10; 21:6, 11). In the case of persons (cf. also 3 Macc. 4:7; Ac. 16:19; 21:30; Jm. 2:6) it may mean to "compel"<sup>37</sup> It seems that Jesus could have been using the word in an even stronger sense than "to draw." After considering Jesus' positive and negative statements (v. 37 & v. 44), it is safe to conclude that He was using this word in the stronger sense of "compelling." Mounce says that, "When taken figuratively (as here in Jn. 6:44) it means 'to compel.'"<sup>38</sup> This same word is used in Acts 16:19, where it says that Paul and Silas were "dragged" into the marketplace to be judged and in John 21:8 to describe the disciples "dragging" the full net of fish into the boat. Zodhiates cautions that this drawing isn't so invasive, as he defines the word, "To draw toward without necessarily the notion of force."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jerry L. Walls & Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 75.

<sup>37</sup> Albrecht Oepke, "ἔλκω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 503.

<sup>38</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 10: 447.

<sup>39</sup> Zodhiates, 568.

Jesus' use of this word implies that if someone resisted the drawing of the Father they would not be successful. Those who appear to resist are not drawn by the Father, but have only received the outward call to salvation. Morris says, "There is not one example in the New Testament of the use of this verb where the resistance is successful. Always the drawing power is triumphant, as here."<sup>40</sup> Boice remembers William Barclay using these examples:

He shows us that it is the word for drawing a heavily laden net to shore, a net filled with a great number of fish (John 21:6, 11). It is the word which is used of Paul and Silas being dragged before the civil authorities in Philippi (Acts 16:19). It is used for drawing a sword from the belt or from its scabbard (John 18:10). Always there is the idea of resistance.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus' words make it clear that no one can come to Jesus on their own power, though all are invited. Rather, Jesus said that no one could come unless the Father draws him and also that all who are given to Him by the Father, will come. Mounce helps with his explanation:

Most commentators hold that John is speaking here of a drawing that goes far beyond moral influence; it is a drawing akin to divine election. No one is able to come to the Father unless the Father draws him or her... The drawing here is not the persuasive power of God's concern for all, but the irresistible attraction of his grace for the elect.<sup>42</sup>

Morris supplements Mounce's observation by saying, "They think they come or that they can come to Jesus entirely on their own volition. Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility. No one, no one at all, can come unless the Father draws him."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Morris, 371.

<sup>41</sup> Boice, 205.

<sup>42</sup> Mounce, 447.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, 329.

Scripture is clear; everyone is invited to come and receive salvation. The Bible makes no apology for God's love for the world and His desire for everyone to be saved. However, Jesus makes it clear that the Father has only drawn some, and that those whom He has drawn, will come and be saved.

### **John 10:25-27**

"Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.'"

The Apostle John records seven "I am" statements in his gospel. Jesus' fourth "I am" statement was that He was the "Good Shepherd." He was the good shepherd because He laid down His life for the sheep. As with other instances when Jesus made a public proclamation about His identity, there are mixed reactions among the people. John records, "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, 'He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"<sup>44</sup>

After an initial uproar, during the Feast of Dedication, Jesus entered the Temple courts. This feast, like all feasts, looked forward to the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Borchert explains:

Like the earlier Tabernacles Feast, this Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah) was symbolized by a celebration of lights. But here the lights did not so much look back to the past leading of God in the time of Moses. Rather they pointed to a hoped-for time when the Messiah would come to the temple and establish, as Judas Maccabeus had anticipated, a time of independence.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> John 10:19-21 (ESV)

<sup>45</sup> Borchert, 337.

D.A. Carson adds, "But as with other feasts, this one, too, is understood to be fulfilled in Jesus the Son of God."<sup>46</sup> Jesus was about to make a Messianic claim to the Jews, who were waiting for the Messiah.

In verse 24, John records, "So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'"<sup>47</sup> The ESV translates the word "κυκλόω" as "gathered." The true meaning of the word is "to encircle, perhaps with hostile intent..."<sup>48</sup> These Jews were not just curious, but were likely angry because Jesus had still not given them a clear explanation of whom He was. As Boice says, "He had been in Galilee for nearly three years and had been teaching publically for that time. He had not often said, at least explicitly, that He was the Messiah..."<sup>49</sup> The Jewish crowd asked for a more clear statement from Jesus as to His Messianic nature.

Jesus' answer caused some confusion. "Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me.'"<sup>50</sup> "Scholars have wrestled with Jesus' answer: 'I did tell you, but you do not believe' (10:25). When did he tell them? Obviously he did not tell them "plainly" (parrēsia), if one is looking for a quotable quote."<sup>51</sup> It is also possible that Jesus did tell them plainly, but the words are not recorded for us in John's gospel. Carson explains why maybe Jesus didn't speak in plain language:

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<sup>46</sup> Carson, 391.

<sup>47</sup> John 10:24 (ESV)

<sup>48</sup> Mounce, 507.

<sup>49</sup> James M. Boice, *The Gospel Of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 3: 122.

<sup>50</sup> John 10:25 (ESV)

<sup>51</sup> Borchert, 338.

When Jesus says I did tell you, he is not referring to an explicit statement. Had he spoken plainly, they would have misunderstood him, for their notions of messiahship could not embrace a suffering servant or a kingdom not immediately political and military... At the same time, all of his ministry, both words and deeds, pointed in the one direction; in that sense he had told them.<sup>52</sup>

There was ample evidence that Jesus was God. Up to this point in John there have been at least seven great miracles that would lead someone to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus thought He was clear, as did the Apostle John, writing at the conclusion of his gospel, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."<sup>53</sup>

Whether Jesus had specifically told the Jews in words or not, John thought "Ample proof existed that Jesus was the Messiah..."<sup>54</sup> If there was significant proof that Jesus was God in the flesh, then why did these Jews not believe? Jesus answered this question clearly, "but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."<sup>55</sup>

"Αλλά" (but) is "an adversative particle originally the neuter plural of ἄλλος... A particle implying in speech some diversity or superaddition to what preceded. It serves, therefore, to mark opposition, antithesis, or transition."<sup>56</sup> Jesus drew a strong and sharp contrast and then dropped a theological bombshell on His Jewish

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<sup>52</sup> Carson, 392.

<sup>53</sup> John 20:31-31 (ESV)

<sup>54</sup> Mounce, 507.

<sup>55</sup> John 10:26-27 (ESV)

<sup>56</sup> Zodhiates, 123.



listeners. His statement can easily be misunderstood to suggest “You’re not one of my sheep because you don’t believe.” That is not what Jesus says. He says, “You don’t believe because you’re not one of my sheep.” The difference is profound. The latter statement puts a person’s ability to believe completely within them while the former gives God the responsibility to enable the person to believe or reject.

“The reason the Jews did not believe was that they didn’t belong to his flock.”<sup>57</sup> Jesus’ statement explains why so many today do not believe even when they have been given every opportunity and all the evidence. Disobedience and denial of the gospel message should not surprise us:

Neither Jesus nor John means to reduce the moral responsibility of the opponents in the slightest. That they are not Jesus’ sheep does not excuse them; it indicts them. But the predestinarian note ensures that even their massive unbelief is not surprising; it is to be expected, and falls under the umbrella of God’s sovereignty.<sup>58</sup>

Morris adds, “The predestinarian strain in this gospel comes out in the reason given for their failure: ‘you are not my sheep.’ Christ’s ‘sheep’ know him (v. 14), but the knowledge of Christ is not the natural possession of anybody. Faith is always a gift of God.”<sup>59</sup> Borchert cautions those of the “Calvinistic” persuasion:

An additional brief word needs to be added concerning John 10:26–29. These verses form an important proof text for some interpreters concerning theories of predestination based on the use of the word “given” at 10:29. As indicated in the earlier discussion at 6:44–47, it is imperative to develop a balanced view on this subject and maintain the tension between the role of God and the role of humans in the process of salvation. And we must always recognize the fact that it is God who does the saving but that human response also is significant.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mounce, 507.

<sup>58</sup> Carson, 393.

<sup>59</sup> Morris, 463.

<sup>60</sup> Borchert, 340.

It is important to understand that all men are responsible for their sin and rebellion against God (Rom. 3:9-20). If one rejects the invitation of salvation through Jesus, then their blood is on their own hands. Everyone deserves hell and everyone is going there without the Spirit's special call and the Father's drawing unto Himself (Jn. 6:44, 10:25-27). Those who go to hell receive what their sin deserves. Those who go to heaven do not receive what their sin deserves, but rather what Jesus' death on the cross purchased on their behalf (Rom. 5:21). Therefore, men and women do accept or reject the invitation of salvation, but the basis of the accepting or rejecting is in Jesus' regeneration and changing in the heart of the person first (Jn. 3:1-15; Acts 16:14). The sovereignty of God doesn't negate the responsibility of man to respond, but the sovereignty of God does explain why anyone accepts the invitation.

Human responsibility does not negate God's sovereignty over salvation; they work together, though one is preeminent over the other. Boice concludes:

... Jesus gives the most highly condensed statements of the doctrines of grace in the entire Gospel, saying that in themselves men and women are unable to believe, that those who believe do so only because God acts in grace to elect them into the company of His people, that all whom God elects do, in fact, come and that none of those who comes is ever lost. These are the central doctrines of the reformed faith as it has been expressed by Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Calvin, and a host of others. If you want it plainly, this is it. This is pure biblical teaching.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Boice, 126.

## Romans 9:9-16

“For this is what the promise said: ‘About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.’ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that GOD’S purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on GOD’S part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on GOD, who has mercy.”

In chapter one Paul covers the topic of righteousness and unrighteousness. Chapter two speaks of how God deals with unrighteousness. Paul, in chapter three, explains to his readers, both Jews and Gentiles, that no one is righteous and that everyone deserves hell. In chapter four Abraham is used as an example that justification is by faith in Christ only and not by works. Paul explains that death came through Adam’s sin and life comes through Christ’s death. As a logical conclusion from chapter five, Paul tells his readers in chapter six that they are now dead to sin and alive in Christ. In chapter seven he uses an example from his own struggles to help his readers understand that sin still remains in the flesh. Chapter eight encourages Christian readers in Christ that the afterlife is to be anticipated and that nothing will interfere with their destiny in heaven with their creator.

Kruse says that chapters 9-11 are the “emotive climax”<sup>62</sup> of the book.

Harrison and Hagner say, “In reality, therefore, this major section of the book deals with ‘unfinished business.’”<sup>63</sup> Also adding, “For all its distinctiveness, this section

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<sup>62</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter To The Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 366.

<sup>63</sup> Everett F Harrison & Donald A. Hagner, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 11: 145, 151

does not lose continuity with the forgoing material. 'Salvation' and 'save' are prominent."<sup>64</sup> The context of the first eight chapters of Romans is clearly and undeniably about soteriological matters. Moo states:

Paul's celebration of God's faithfulness and love in 8:31-39 is a fitting end to his theological exposition. We might now expect Paul to solidify and apply his theology in a series of exhortations of the kind that often conclude his letters. But these exhortations do not begin until chapter 12. What fills the gap between the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 12 is Paul's anguished wrestling with the problem of Israel's unbelief. Is this section, then, a detour from the main line of Paul's argument in Romans, an excursus that disrupts the natural flow of the letter? Not at all. Romans 9-11 is an important and integral part of the letter... Romans 9-11, therefore, is an integral part of Paul's letter to the Romans. These chapters contribute to Paul's exposition of the gospel by showing that it provides fully for God's promises to Israel, when those promises are rightly understood.<sup>65</sup>

Peterson and Williams summarize chapters 9-11 this way:

First, he says that God's word hasn't failed but God fulfilled his sovereign plan (Rom. 9:6-29). Second, he answers in terms of human accountability: God's word hasn't failed; rather, Israel reaped rejection from God because it sowed unbelief (Rom. 9:30-10:21). Third, Paul answers in light of God's commitment to his promises to the patriarchs: God will yet bring a Jewish remnant to himself (Rom. 11:1-32).<sup>66</sup>

In the first five verses of chapter nine, Paul shares his heartbreak for his fellow Jews who had rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, "But it is not as though the word of GOD has failed."<sup>67</sup> Paul was defending God's good and sovereign plan to save many people from their sin. While he shared his anguish over much of Israel's unbelief, he also defended God's good plan of salvation, showing the Jews that God had not failed. Although many Jews thought they were in good standing

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<sup>64</sup> Harrison & Hagner, 145, 151.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle To The Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 547.

<sup>66</sup> Robert A. Peterson & Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 60.

<sup>67</sup> Romans 9:6 (ESV)

before God because of the promises made to Israel, they misunderstood the big picture of God's Kingdom. Kruse points out, "The promise had not been made to the whole nation and had never been intended to apply to the whole nation."<sup>68</sup>

In verses 9-12, Paul explains what the promise of salvation looked like for Israel. He used the example of Abraham and Sarah from Genesis 18:10 and 14: if anyone who came from the lineage of Abraham is considered Israel, then Ishmael, Abraham's first son, fits that category as well. Paul's point is that the nation of Israel came from the promised son, Isaac, not just any son of Abraham. Paul concluded, "This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring."<sup>69</sup> Paul made it clear that Israel had misunderstood the promise.

Paul then addressed the next people in Abraham's family line; Isaac, Rebekah, and their children. Paul writes:

For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that GOD'S purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."<sup>70</sup>

The word used here for "election" is "ἐκλογήν", which means, "to choose or select."

"Election, [is] the benevolent purpose of God by which any are chosen unto salvation so that they are led to embrace and persevere in Christ's bestowed grace and the

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<sup>68</sup> Kruse, 353.

<sup>69</sup> Romans 9:8 (ESV)

<sup>70</sup> Romans 9:9-13 (ESV)

enjoyment of its privileges and blessings here and hereafter.”<sup>71</sup> Schrenk adds, “The action ‘selection’ is predominant, and this from qualitative angles. Thus in Plato it is used for the selection of rulers and guardians...”<sup>72</sup> Paul says that, “in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls,” He chose Jacob over Esau in the womb.

Paul then continued to explain God’s election. “What shall we say then? Is there injustice on GOD’S part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on GOD, who has mercy.”<sup>73</sup> Paul anticipated the objection from his readers. He anticipated the question, “But... that’s not fair, is it?” Paul’s response is that it had always been this way. Paul quotes Exodus 33:19 to show God has always shown mercy on whomever He wished and withheld it from whomever He wished. Harrison and Hagner describe Paul’s useage of Exodus 33:19:

To demonstrate that injustice is by no means consistent with God’s character, Paul goes further into the history of Israel, focusing on the “Golden Calf” incident at Sinai. There the people sinned grievously. If God had acted simply in justice, he could have blotted out his people. Instead, he recalled Moses to the mountain and for a second time gave him the tables of commandments, yet not until he had proclaimed to his servant Moses, “I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” That mercy was seen in sparing a sinful nation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Zodhiates, 545.

<sup>72</sup> Gottlob Schrenk, “ἐκλογή,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 176.

<sup>73</sup> Romans 9:14-16 (ESV)

<sup>74</sup> Harrison & Hagner, 153.

Paul's point is clear: "God can show mercy and compassion on whomever He wants and there is no injustice with Him doing so." Harrison and Hagner offer this helpful reminder: "God is not bound to show mercy to any."<sup>75</sup> Bultmann explains mercy as, "the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else."<sup>76</sup> Mercy is not giving someone what is deserved. God shows mercy to those whom He chooses to.

There are two ways that this text shows the sovereignty of God over salvation. First, salvation is not based on human works and second, salvation is God's choice. This passage makes it difficult, if not impossible to argue salvation based on man's works. Walls and Dongell, two Arminian theologians, agree with the Calvinist argument for salvation apart from works, "Indeed R.C. Sproul, a prominent Calvinist, claims that the entire edifice of Arminian theology is destroyed by a single verse: 'It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.'"<sup>77</sup> Morris concludes from this passage:

Paul stresses purpose and election. There is a strong emphasis on the divine act. It is not that Jacob could be said in any way to merit salvation. God had a purpose, and he worked it out in his own way. Paul says that God did what he did so that his purpose of election might stand... God's purpose will remain, no matter what.<sup>78</sup>

Harrison and Hagner add:

The value of the account of the two brothers is to make clear that in election God does not wait until individuals or nations are developed and then make a

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<sup>75</sup> Harrison & Hagner, 153.

<sup>76</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, "ἔλεος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 477.

<sup>77</sup> Walls & Dongell, 85.

<sup>78</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle To The Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 356.

choice on the basis of character or achievement. If he did so, this would make a mockery of the concept of election, because it would locate the basis in humanity rather than in God and his purpose. God's love for Jacob, then, must be coupled with election rather than explained by some worthiness found in him. Such, too, is the case with the nation of Israel.<sup>79</sup>

Schreiner writes, "The wording underscores that God's promise to bless Jacob was both prior to and not based on any good works he did, and the exclusion of Esau would be estimated similarly: his evil works were not contemplated in advance as the reason for his exclusion."<sup>80</sup>

Romans nine could not be clearer. Jacob and Esau were still in the womb and could not have worked toward anything; therefore God's choice of one over the other was based solely on His sovereign choice and is entirely void from the works of man.

Secondly, this text shows that God is in sovereign control over salvation by teaching that salvation is God's choice. "So then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." Schreiner rightly points out that in Paul's argument, "the reason Jacob rather than Esau was chosen to be the recipient of the blessing resided in God's sovereign will rather than Jacob's virtue."<sup>81</sup> This section of Romans makes it abundantly clear that God sovereignly chooses those that He will draw to Himself to save.

There exists pushback to this interpretation. The pushback comes in two forms. First, some Arminian scholars say that it is unnecessary and unwarranted to say that God sovereignly elects individuals to salvation, but instead that He elects

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<sup>79</sup> Harrison & Hagner, 151-52.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas R. Schriener, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 499.

<sup>81</sup> Schriener, 500.



groups. Schreiner notes: "Another controversy exists over whether the salvation promised here relates to individuals or groups. Many opt for the latter and exclude the former because Paul's focus in these chapters is surely on the salvation promised to corporate Israel."<sup>82</sup>

Ben Witherington, states his objection to the Calvinistic interpretation of Romans 9 this way:

Election for Paul is a corporate thing. It was in ethnic Israel; it is now "in Christ." From Paul's viewpoint, which is simply an adaptation of the view found in early Judaism, "election" does not guarantee the final salvation of individual Christian converts any more than it guaranteed the final salvation of individual Israelites in the past.<sup>83</sup>

C.K. Barrett makes a similar argument:

This means that election does not take place (as might at first appear from Paul's examples) arbitrarily or fortuitously; it takes place always and only in Christ. They are elect who are in him; they who are elect are in him. It is failure to remember this that causes confusion over Paul's doctrine of election and predestination.<sup>84</sup>

Walls and Dongell say it this way, "These three chapters, properly read together, address not so much the question of how individuals are saved, but rather what Christians should say about Israel in light of its current rejection of the gospel."<sup>85</sup>

Michael Horton, a Calvinist scholar, responds in length to Witherington's argument:

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<sup>82</sup> Schriener, 497.

<sup>83</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Problem With Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism and Wesleyanism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 62-63.

<sup>84</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle To The Romans*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1957), 183.

<sup>85</sup> Walls & Dongell, 85.

This view is to be faulted not for what it affirms but for what it denies. Calvinists agree that the church, as known by God, is the corporate body of the elect. They also emphasize that election is “in Christ,” the Mediator who is both the electing God and the elect head in whom his people are chosen. We also agree that some people are chosen and rejected for certain temporal tasks rather than with reference to salvation. However, there is simply too much biblical evidence for the election of individuals in Christ to leave the matter there. Paul’s point in Romans 9 is the opposite of Witherington’s claim. In fact, the apostle bases his argument for God’s freedom to elect and reject today on the fact that he has always exercised this freedom in Israel’s history. That individuals are in view is indisputable: they have names (Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Moses and Pharaoh). Furthermore, Paul’s application is clearly soteriological.<sup>86</sup>

Schreiner adds, “I have argued at some length elsewhere that such a dichotomy is logically and exegetically flawed, for groups are always composed of individuals, and one cannot have the former without including the latter.”<sup>87</sup> In addition he adds,

Once again many scholars insist that this passage does not relate to individual salvation but only to the temporal destiny of nations since Jacob and Esau represent two peoples (Gen. 25:23) and their historical destiny. But again this view ignores the fact that the issue in the context of Rom. 9 relates to the salvation of the Jews, and a discussion of historical destiny apart from salvation is irrelevant to the issue that called for this discussion.<sup>88</sup>

The second objection to the Reformed interpretation is something Arminian theologians call “foreseen faith.” Roger Olson says that, “Individual election, predestination, is *conditional* in that we must accept it. If we do, it turns out that God foreknew that we would.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Michael Horton, *For Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 60.

<sup>87</sup> Schreiner, 497-98.

<sup>88</sup> Schreiner, 501-02.

<sup>89</sup> Roger E. Olson, “What’s Wrong With Calvinism?,” Patheos, March 2013, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2013/03/whats-wrong-with-calvinism/>.

The argument is that God elects those whom He sees will chose to believe in and worship Him in the future. In other words, God looks into the future and sees who will choose Him and then proactively chooses them to be His own.

Schreiner and Moo respond to these Arminian objections in a clear and succinct way. Schreiner says,

Any attempt to explain the promise of Jacob on the basis of God's foresight of Jacob's good works turns the text upside down. Romans 9:12 reiterates the thought— the promise to Jacob and the exclusion of Esau were not based on works... This text forges a close connection between the themes of justification and predestination, implying that they are inseparable.<sup>90</sup>

Moo makes the point that if foreseen faith was in mind then Paul could have and probably would have said so:

Surely, if Paul had assumed that faith was the basis for God's election, he would have pointed this out when he raised the question in v. 14 about the fairness of God's election. All he would have needed to say at that point was "of course God is not unjust in choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau, for his choosing took into account the faith of one and the unbelief of the other." Paul's silence on this point is telling.<sup>91</sup>

The objections to the Calvinist arguments for the usage of Romans 9 as a support of God's sovereignty over salvation fall short. Those who object dig deeply into contextual studies in an attempt to prove the text to say something that Paul did not intend. If one digs deep into the context of the passage or takes the text at face value, it leads to the same place; God is sovereign over salvation and although no one deserves salvation, God gives grace and mercy to those whom He has chosen.

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<sup>90</sup> Schreiner, 499.

<sup>91</sup> Moo, 583.

## **Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will... In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”

Paul’s introduction to Ephesians is important. It identifies specifically whom Paul is writing to. Paul writes, “To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.”<sup>92</sup> By “saints” Paul means “Christians.” As Wood explains, “Saints (hágioi) is the normal New Testament designation for Christians. It denotes inward, personal consecration to God.”<sup>93</sup> It is important to understand that Paul is addressing people who have been saved. Klein explains the context of Paul’s introduction to the epistle:

Paul begins his letter not with his usual thanksgiving section, where he typically thanks God for what he has done in the lives of the readers, but with an exalted praise to God giving reasons why God deserves such worship. These blessings accrue to those “in Christ,” a phrase repeated in various forms throughout the section as the arena and means of God’s praiseworthy acts.<sup>94</sup>

Paul’s language is not unlike much Jewish literature of the Second Temple period.

“Often those who bless God do so because God has given blessings. They also often describe God as the God of some great figure of the past such as Abraham or Israel

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<sup>92</sup> Ephesians 1:1b (ESV)

<sup>93</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 11: 22.

<sup>94</sup> William W. Klein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Revised Edition)*: ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 12: 47.

and then state why God should be blessed.”<sup>95</sup> Paul begins his reasoning for praising God in verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”

Paul explained the main reason for the Christian’s praise towards God, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”<sup>96</sup> Paul uses “ἐξελέξατο” in 1:4 to communicate the idea of choice. It is important to note the aorist tense and middle voice of this verb. It indicates, “God’s totally independent choice. Because the verb is reflexive it signifies that God not only chose by Himself but for Himself.”<sup>97</sup> Therefore, according to Paul, the first reason we should give praise to God is that he chose Christians to be Christians before the foundation of the world. F. F. Bruce says that this verse:

Denotes the divine act of election as taking place in eternity. Time belongs to the created order: believers’ present experience of the blessings bestowed by God is the fulfillment on the temporal plane of his purpose of grace toward them conceived in eternity.<sup>98</sup>

Wood points out that this “choosing” is a common theme in Scripture. “The verb ‘chose’ is the usual one employed in LXX in connection with God’s choice of Israel. It implies the taking of a smaller number out of a larger.”<sup>99</sup> Klein adds:

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<sup>95</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2010), 45.

<sup>96</sup> Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)

<sup>97</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1986), 11.

<sup>98</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle To The Colossians, To Philemon, And To The Ephesians*, The New International Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 254.

<sup>99</sup> Wood, 24.

Paul uses the common word “eklegomai” (GK 1721), which means to pick out, select, or choose something or someone. Of course, it has deep theological meaning in both Testaments, growing out of God’s selection of Israel as his covenantal people: “But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’: I have chosen you and have not rejected you” (Isa. 41:8-9, emphasis added).<sup>100</sup>

It is therefore not a new idea that God might chose or select someone or something for Himself and for His glory.

It is noteworthy that Paul went out of his way to make sure that his readers understood that the “choosing,” “selecting,” and “predestining” is all part of God’s purpose and plan. Lincoln points out the words that Paul used to make his point:

The number and variety of words used in this passage to describe God’s purpose is impressive: ἐκλέγω, “choose” (v.4); προορίζω “predestined,” εὐδοκία “good pleasure,” θέλημα “will” (v. 5); εὐδοκία “purposed” (v.9); κληρώ “appointed,” προορίζω “predestined,” προορίζω “plan,” θέλημα “purpose” (v. 11).<sup>101</sup>

God chose whom He would save, from His good purpose and desire, before the world existed. MacArthur points out that,

From all eternity, before the foundation of the world, and therefore completely apart from any merit or deserving that any person could have, God chose us in Him, “in Christ” (v.3). By God’s sovereign election, those who are saved were placed in eternal union with Christ before creation even took place.<sup>102</sup>

Paul included the words “holy and blameless” to that which God’s people were chosen for. This is similar to that which Israel was chosen for. Israel was

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<sup>100</sup> Klein, 48.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 23.

<sup>102</sup> MacArthur, 11.

chosen by God to be different from other nations. Christians are those chosen by God to have eternal salvation, through which they will become holy and blameless. Wood concludes, "Election in Christ has a moral aim in view. It is expressed both positively and negatively. To be "holy" means to be set apart for God in order to reflect his purity."<sup>103</sup>

Paul continues in verse five, "In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will..."<sup>104</sup> In verse four Christians are told that God "chose" them and in verse five Christians are told that God "predestined" them to be adopted as sons. The word for "predestined" is "προορίζω." There is no ambiguity in this word, "the verb 'predestine' means 'to decide on beforehand' or 'to predetermine.'"<sup>105</sup> Schmidt, commenting on the simplicity of this word adds, "This comparatively rare and late word is used in the Greek Bible only 6 times in the New Testament in the sense "to foreordain," "to predestinate."<sup>106</sup>

Thielman helps to explain what it means for a Christian to be predestined to be adopted as a son:

God determined that they would be his people before the foundation of the world. Their status as his people, therefore, came as an utterly free gift, irrespective of anything they could possibly have done to merit it... Though in 1:4 Paul had said that God's purpose in election was that they might be holy

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<sup>103</sup> Wood, 24.

<sup>104</sup> Ephesians 1:5 (ESV)

<sup>105</sup> Klein, 49.

<sup>106</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "προορίζω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 456.

and blameless before him in love, he now describes God's purpose in predetermining his people as their "adoptive sonship."<sup>107</sup>

Paul says that predestination is an act of "love". He says, "In love he predestined us..." The Christian must remember that Paul's purpose is to give the Christian a reason to praise God. Wood says, "That has the effect of emphasizing the loving nature of predestination. Any interpretation of this mysterious doctrine that detracts from the love of God is rightly suspect. Its positive intention is underlined here."<sup>108</sup>

In verse 11 Paul says, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will..."<sup>109</sup> It seems as though Paul is restating what he has already written in verses four and five. Thielman's comments help:

The thought here is similar to that of verse 5, where Paul uses the same term, although in the active rather than the passive voice. Just as in verse 5 God has chosen believers because he has predestined them for adoption, so here God has made them his heirs because he has predestined them. Moreover, just as in verse 5 Paul says that God has predestined believers for adoption "according to the good pleasure of his will," so here he says that believers were predestined "according to the purpose of the one who works all things according to the counsel of his will." In both places his basic thought is the same: the blessing of God's relationship with his people comes at God's joyfully considered initiative. In verse 5, however the accent falls on the pleasure that God took in his plan for his people. Here the accent falls on the considered nature of that plan...He carefully planned to make his people his heirs before he did it. This action was neither haphazard nor dependent on anything they would do to earn it.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Thielman, 51.

<sup>108</sup> Wood, 24.

<sup>109</sup> Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)

<sup>110</sup> Thielman, 74.



Jack Cottrell, a prominent Arminian voice, opposes the Calvinist interpretation. He contents that, “[God] foreknows whether an individual will meet the conditions for salvation which he has sovereignly imposed... This is the import of Eph. 1:4, which says that ‘He chose us in Him’– in Christ.”<sup>111</sup> For Cottrell, the “choosing” and “predestining” in Ephesians one does not weaken his Arminian conviction because he sees God’s foreknowledge as the first act. Peterson and Williams argue that Cottrell has mistaken Paul’s words, saying that the text of Ephesians cannot have foreknowledge in mind:

Paul’s words ‘He chose us in him before... creation’ do not describe a condition that sinners must meet in order to be chosen by God. The words do not speak of people’s response at all; they speak of God’s plan. And it is the same for Ephesians 1:11. Paul does not speak of human beings but of God’s sovereign will when he says, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”<sup>112</sup>

Bryan Chapell, a prominent Calvinist voice, summarizes a second Arminian opposition: “Some commentators debate whether the election in Ephesians 1:4-6 is corporate (a group is elect) or individual (each person chosen).”<sup>113</sup> Slater, an Arminian scholar, says, “God’s plan was predestined (see 1:4) and that the Christ event was central to the plan.”<sup>114</sup> The Arminian focus in Ephesians is not the salvation of the person, but rather the plan of salvation. Klein says it this way:

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<sup>111</sup> Jack Cottrell, “Conditional Election,” in *Grace Unlimited*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 61.

<sup>112</sup> Peterson & Williams, 58-59.

<sup>113</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 26.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2012), 45.

Because of the heated debates surrounding “predestination,” I must observe that Paul never uses this verb to assert that God has determined the specific individuals to save, nor has he predetermined the means for a specific individual’s salvation. In other words, God does not predestine that some have faith. From Paul’s uses we see that predestination concerns God’s predetermination of certain goals for his people, here that they become members of his family through adoption.<sup>115</sup>

Chapell responds by conceding that a “corporate” salvation can’t be ruled out, but:

To insist that the election is merely corporate would be to overlook the way that the personal blessings of being “chosen” and “predestined” (Eph. 1:4-5) are part of the larger picture of spiritual blessings Paul describes in Ephesians 1:3-14; and these other spiritual blessings undoubtedly have individual dimensions (e.g., redemption, forgiveness, sealing of the Holy Spirit).<sup>116</sup>

In other words, if only corporate blessings are in Paul’s mind, then why speak of redemption, forgiveness, and the personal sealing of the Holy Spirit (all of which are blessings to the individual) in the same section? It seems at the very least, both corporate and personal dimensions of predestination are in Paul’s view.

John MacArthur contributes to this discussion by showing that “The Bible speaks of three kinds of election.”<sup>117</sup> He identifies the three kinds as: Theocratic Election (Deut. 7:6), which is a national election (Israel), Vocational Election (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5), which calls men to specific roles in God’s Kingdom work (Paul as the chosen instrument to bring the gospel to the Gentiles), and Salvational Election (John 6:44; Eph. 1:4-5), which deals with personal and individual drawing to salvation.<sup>118</sup> It is imperative to not think all “calling” and “choosing” in Scripture

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<sup>115</sup> Klein, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Chapell, 26.

<sup>117</sup> MacArthur, 10.

<sup>118</sup> MacArthur, 10.

have the exact same meaning, but in Ephesians 1:4-5 and 11, it is clear that this “predestining” and “choosing” is individual, at least in part.

## PASSAGES USED TO ARGUE AGAINST DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY OVER SALVATION

### **1 Timothy 2:3-4**

“This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of GOD our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

There are two main passages Arminian scholars use most frequently to argue against a Reformed view of God’s sovereignty over salvation. The first is 1 Timothy 2:3-4. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy, pastor of the Ephesian Church, addressing important problems that had arisen. Earle summarizes the book this way: “To be more specific, Paul says he had urged Timothy to ‘stay in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer (1 Tim. 1:3).’ The apostle also deals with numerous problems that would arise in the church and gives advice to how they should be handled.”<sup>119</sup>

Paul begins his letter by warning Timothy to watch out for false teachers in the church that can cause division and lead people astray. He begins the second chapter by “urging” Timothy to pray for the leaders in Ephesus. Paul writes, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a

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<sup>119</sup> Ralph Earle, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 11: 344.

peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”<sup>120</sup> It seems that Paul is asking Timothy to pray for those in high places so that the church will “lead a peaceful and quite life,” probably indicating a lack of persecution from these political powers. Maybe Paul had in mind something like: “The fact that we are permitted to assemble peaceably for public worship is dependent on our rights under law– law as upheld and enforced by our legislators, administrators, and judicial leaders.”<sup>121</sup>

According to Paul, praying for those in high positions was “good.” “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of GOD our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>122</sup> Paul’s claim that God desires all people to be saved has caused much conversation and deliberation among theologians. Towner points out the difficulty that arises: “... the meaning of God’s will to save ‘all people’ has been equally problematic.”<sup>123</sup> One of the reasons this verse has been problematic is that it has caused many to logically conclude that if God desires all to be saved, then all, are or will be, saved. This seemingly logical reasoning leads some to adopt a theology of universalism, but this is clearly not the truth, for not all are saved.

Paul uses the word “θέλω” (desires) to carry the idea of “what pleases Him.” “To will, i.e., to have in mind, purpose, intend, please.”<sup>124</sup> If the interpreter choses a

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<sup>120</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>121</sup> Earle, 357.

<sup>122</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)

<sup>123</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters To Timothy And Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 177-78.

<sup>124</sup> Zodhiates, 727.

stronger word, they might run into theological troubles and inconsistencies as the Bible speaks Hell. If in fact God “purposes” for something to happen then it will come to pass, as Isaiah 46:10 says, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.” The ESV, NASB, and NRSV all use the word “desire,” while the NIV uses “wants,” which is equally as mild in meaning.

It is important to understand that, “When God desires all men to be saved, He is being consistent with who He is... No true biblical theology can teach that God takes pleasure in the damnation of the wicked. Yet though it does not please Him, God will receive glory even in the damnation of unbelievers (cf. Rom. 9:22-23).”<sup>125</sup> Towner adds, “First, the verb ‘to will’ should be understood in the strongest sense as indicating God’s will... It is God’s universal intention, as opposed to some form of exclusivism, that is mainly in the mind.”<sup>126</sup>

The appropriate question then becomes, “If everyone is not saved, but God ‘desires’ that all are saved; then what does it mean for God to desire?” Although God desires something to happen, it doesn’t necessarily mean He has decreed it to happen, as Oden said, “It is not an expression of the absolute decree of God, otherwise all would be already saved.”<sup>127</sup> MacArthur explains it this way:

Obviously, in some inscrutable sense, God’s desire for the world’s salvation is different from His eternal saving purpose. We can understand this to some degree from a human perspective; after all, our purposes frequently differ from our desires. We may desire, for example, to spend a day at leisure, yet a

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<sup>125</sup> John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 69.

<sup>126</sup> Towner, 177.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 48.

higher purpose compels us to go to work instead. Similarly, God's saving purposes transcend His desires. (There is a crucial difference, of course: We might be compelled by circumstances beyond our control to choose what we do not desire. But God's choices are determined by nothing other than His own sovereign, eternal purpose).<sup>128</sup>

Gordon Fee adds,

And to say that God wants (not "wills," and there it must come to pass) all people to be saved, implies neither that all (meaning everybody) will be saved (against 3:6; 4:2; or 4:10, e.g.) nor that God's will is somehow frustrated since all, indeed, are not saved. The concern is simply with the universal scope of the gospel over against some form of heretical exclusivism or narrowness.<sup>129</sup>

It is clear that God's desire here for all people to be saved is not the same as His eternal decree or purpose. The Bible speaks of a place called Hell and tells us that people are going there. Therefore God does not decree everything He desires.

The Arminian understanding can easily be reached from this passage. If this text does not teach universal salvation, then, at least, it teaches that all are equally invited to accept the offer and that God is not in control of their acceptance or rejection. If God desires all to be saved, then doesn't everyone have the same chance so that as many people as possible would come and believe? Walls and Dongell seem to think so. They say, "The Pastoral Epistles abound with passages pointing toward God's universal saving intentions: 'God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:3-4)."<sup>130</sup> There are no exegetical proofs for the Arminian interpretation here, nor is there a need. It is clear from Paul's words that God truly does desire all to be saved. So how does the Calvinist

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<sup>128</sup> MacArthur, 68-9.

<sup>129</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 64.

<sup>130</sup> Walls & Dongell, 51.

contend, in light of this passage, for the sovereignty of God over salvation? They use the same argument deployed to dismiss the Universalist argument. Because God can desire something and decree something else, God truly does desire that all be saved, but He has determined, for an unknown reason, that it will bring Him more glory if He elects some to salvation. John Murray and Ned Stonehouse say, "We have found that God himself expresses an ardent desire for the fulfillment of certain things which he has not decreed in his inscrutable counsel to come to pass."<sup>131</sup> The point is this: God's desire for all to be saved does not negate all the passages that tell of a sovereignly elected, chosen, predestined, and called people to salvation. Paul's words to Timothy adds more information to our knowledge of God's desires. These words do not, however, impede on the massive amount of stress that Jesus and Paul place on the sovereignty of God over salvation.

## **2 Peter 3:9**

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

The second frequently used passage, and perhaps the most popular, to defend the Arminian view is 2 Peter 3:9. As Douglas Moo says, "Obviously Arminians have found in this verse very important support for their view that the only reason human beings fail to experience God's salvation is because of their own choice."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> John Murray & Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Free Offer of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presb. & Ref., 1979), 26.

<sup>132</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 188.

Peter tells his readers that they should remember that he has predicted many times that “scoffers” will come in and try to lead many Christians astray with false doctrine and lies. Peter sums up these false teachings by using this example: “They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’”<sup>133</sup> Apparently there were false teachers and scoffers that were telling the Christians that Jesus was not coming back and this is why they had been waiting so long.

Peter’s objective was that they “remember” what the prophets and the rest of the Scriptures had taught about the Lord’s second coming. J. Daryl Charles summarizes chapter 3 this way: “Having been reminded that God indeed does judge the unrighteous, the readers are admonished to live a life that is worthy of their calling as they await the final day of moral reckoning.”<sup>134</sup> Peter gives an encouraging “fact” for the Christian to consider, “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”<sup>135</sup> Peter’s point was that the seeming delay of the Lord is not a delay at all; His time is not like our time.

It is the next verse, 2 Peter 3:9, that has “been a battleground between some Arminian and some Calvinistic interpreters.”<sup>136</sup> Peter says, “The Lord is not slow to

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<sup>133</sup> 2 Peter 3:4a (ESV)

<sup>134</sup> J. Daryl Charles, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 13: 379.

<sup>135</sup> 2 Peter 3:8 (ESV)

<sup>136</sup> Edwin A. Blum, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 12: 286.



fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”<sup>137</sup>

Peter Davids points out that the most likely reason for Peter’s inclusion of this section was that “in the world of 2 Peter the Epicureans were arguing that the delay of the judgment was in fact an argument against the idea of God’s providence.”<sup>138</sup> Gene Green agrees:

At the heart of Epicurean philosophy was the notion that the gods, if indeed they existed at all, are not providentially engaged in the workings of the world. Since theirs is an ideal existence of unsullied bliss, they do not become entangled in human affairs. Humans cannot expect anything whatsoever from them, including answers to prayers or demonstrations of divine displeasure. The gods are beyond this world, not present, and not perceptible.<sup>139</sup>

Therefore Peter felt the need to encourage the Christians of the Dispersion that Jesus is coming back and that He is not slow to come or delaying in any way. It is not that Jesus is not sovereign and can’t intervene in human affairs, but that He is sovereignly waiting for His own purposes. “It is that quality by which God bears with sinners, holds back his wrath, refrains from intervening in judgment as soon as the sinner’s deeds deserve it, though not indefinitely.”<sup>140</sup>

Peter makes a point that God’s “slowness” is not as some count “slowness.”

“The goal of God’s patience/ long-suffering/ slowness to anger is human

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<sup>137</sup> 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

<sup>138</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter And Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 278.

<sup>139</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 327.

<sup>140</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 312.

repentance.”<sup>141</sup> Green connects this verse in 2 Peter to the above passage (1 Tim. 2:3-4), as having the same purpose, “The same divine desire for salvation of humanity is expressed in 1 Tim. 2:4, which says that God ‘desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (NRSV).”<sup>142</sup> Both verses teach the same truth: God wants/desires all to come to repentance and be saved.

God’s patience (μακροθυμέω) or longsuffering is present throughout the Bible. No less than 11 passages in Scripture describe God as a patient and longsuffering divinity (Joel 2:12-13; Rm. 2:4; Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Jon. 3:10, 4:12; Nah. 1:3). The biblical usage of “μακροθυμέω” is to “suffer long, be long-suffering, as opposed to hasty anger or punishment (1 Cor. 13:4; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Pet. 3:9), to forbear (Matt. 18:26, 29), to endure patiently as opposed to losing faith or giving up (Heb. 6:15; James 5:7, 8), to tarry, delay (Luke 18:7).”<sup>143</sup>

Peter links God’s patience with His lack of desire for any to perish (ἀπόλλυμι). This word should not be seen as annihilation, but as a future eternal punishment. Zodhiates helps in understanding the biblical usage:

Spoken of eternal death, i.e., future punishment, exclusion from the Messiah’s kingdom. In this sense it has the same meaning as *apothnēskō* (599), to die (Matt. 10:28; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; 9:56). This eternal death is called the second death (Rev. 20:14). In Luke 9:25, to “destroy himself” (a.t.) means to subject himself to eternal death, which is the opposite of eternal life (John

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<sup>141</sup> Davids, 279.

<sup>142</sup> Green, 328.

<sup>143</sup> Zodhiates, 939.

6:50, 51, 58). Physical and eternal death are to be distinguished (John 8:21, 24; 11:25, 26; Rom. 7:10; 8:13).<sup>144</sup>

So what of the theological battle that has ensued over the interpretation of this passage? Arminian thinkers use this passage to support the idea that God has decided to not intervene in the affairs of human decision. Therefore God is genuinely waiting to see who will come to Him for repentance. Davids' interpretation of the passage serves as a good example of the Arminian treatment:

It looks like 2 Peter is saying that God does not wish even the "scoffers" to perish (although our author does not have any expectation that they will repent) but rather wants even them to repent. God's will may not be done, but it will not be for lack of trying on his part.<sup>145</sup>

This interpretation focuses on the "desire" of God without asking any other questions of the text. The Calvinist takes a different approach. The Calvinist asks two questions of the text. First, to whom is Peter writing? Who is this letter written too? Who is Peter telling of God's desire? When Peter says that God is "patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance," who is the "you" and "any" and "all?" Bauckham writes:

"any" does not take up "some people" in v 9a, but contrasts with "all": God desires all, without exception, to repent and escape damnation. But "all" is clearly limited by "you"... Here it is for the sake of the repentance of 2 Peter's Christian readers. No doubt repentance from those sins into which some of them have been enticed by the false teachers (2:14, 18; 3:17) is especially in mind.<sup>146</sup>

Bauckham's point is that whatever your theological stance on the sovereignty of God, this passage's context has the Christian or "elect" (1 Pet. 1:1, 2 Pet. 3:1) in mind.

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<sup>144</sup> Zodhiates, 230.

<sup>145</sup> Davids, 281.

<sup>146</sup> Bauckham, 313.

The “you” in the text that God does not wish to perish are the elect readers that Peter is writing to. In other words, when Peter says “you,” he is talking about the specific people he is writing to, not all humanity.

Schreiner says it this way:

We must also ask who was in view when he spoke of “anyone” (tinas) perishing and “all” (pantas) coming to repentance. One option is that he considered every person without exception. Some understand 1 Tim 2:4 similarly, “God ... wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” We do not have space to comment on the text in 1 Timothy here, but we should note that debate exists over the meaning of “all men” in 1 Tim 2:4 as well. Or we can think of Ezek 18:32: “For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!” (cf. also 18:23). In this latter instance God’s regret over the perishing of anyone is clear. Nevertheless, we have to ask whether the verse in 2 Peter has the same meaning as the texts in Ezekiel. If it does, how does this fit with the teaching that God has ordained and decreed that only some will be saved? Many scholars, of course, doubt that the Scripture teaches that God ordains that only some will be saved, but in my estimation the Scriptures do clearly teach such an idea (cf. John 6:37, 44–45, 65; 10:16, 26; Acts 13:48; Rom 8:29–30; 9:1–23; Eph 1:4–5, 11, etc.).<sup>147</sup>

He also adds:

Having said all this, 2 Pet 3:9 may not relate to this issue directly anyway. The “anyone” and “all” in the verse may be an expansion of “you” (hymas) earlier in the verse. Peter did not reflect, according to this view, on the fate of all people in the world without exception. He considered those in the church who had wavered under the influence of the false teachers. God desires every one of them to repent.<sup>148</sup>

Moo contributes:

In this verse, the statement about God wanting “everyone to come to repentance” is preceded and governed by the statement that “he [the Lord] is patient with you.” In other words, it is God’s patience toward the believers to whom Peter writes that is the main idea here. We should perhaps, then qualify

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<sup>147</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 381.

<sup>148</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 382.

the “everyone” at the end of the verse in terms of this leading idea: God is patient with you, wanting everyone of you to repent before the end comes.<sup>149</sup>

To use a simple example: if a teacher stands in front of a classroom of High School students to teach a math class and starts the class with the question “Did everyone finish their homework?” Is he, in context, only asking if those High School students sitting in his classroom have finished their homework? Or is he asking if every High School student in the world, who has ever existed and who will ever exist, has finished his or her homework? The students sitting in his class would effortlessly understand this clear interpretation and any other interpretation would be odd, as they are the ones to whom the teacher is speaking. As the class went on, maybe he would ask if there are “any” questions. The class would understand that by “any,” the teacher meant “any math questions related to what they were talking about in the class at that time.” It would be clear to them, given the context and setting, that the teacher was not asking everyone in the cosmos to ask him any question about any subject.

The second question that Calvinist thinkers ask of the text is: “what type of will or desire is Peter speaking of?” As previously discussed, God has a “desired will” and a “decreed will.” The question of which will or desire Peter is speaking of must be answered to correctly interpret this text. Thomas Schreiner says regarding this passage:

We must distinguish between two different senses in God’s will. There is a decretive will of God and a desired will of God. God desires the salvation of all in one sense, but he does not ultimately ordain that all will be saved. Many

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<sup>149</sup> Moo, 188.

think this approach is double-talk and outright nonsense. Again, space forbids us from answering this question in detail, but this view has been recently and convincingly argued by J. Piper. He demonstrates that such distinctions in God's will are not the result of philosophical sleight of hand but careful biblical exegesis... Even if the verse is restricted to those influenced by the false teachers, Peter referred to what God desires, not to what he ordains. At the end of the day, restricting "anyone" to church members is not the most satisfying solution in this text. By extension we should understand 2 Pet 3:9 in the same way as Ezek 18:32. It refers to God's desire that everyone without exception be saved. It follows, then, that Peter spoke of the desired rather than the decreed will of God.<sup>150</sup>

John Calvin wrote:

No mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving-kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps (in such a way to lead to Himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world.<sup>151</sup>

In other words we need to distinguish between God's two "wills." We need to, from the information Scripture provides (Biblical Theology), decide whether any given text is speaking of God's "desiderative will" (what God desires) and God's "effective will" (what God effectually makes happen).<sup>152</sup>

Given both context and biblical theology, the text of 2 Peter 3:9 does not contradict the Calvinist stance that God does love all people, gives a general call to all people to repent, but only effectually calls some to be saved. Even if the contextual problem of the Arminian argument is settled, there remains a significant theological problem. It is clear in Scripture that God does not decree everything He desires. It is also clear in Scripture that God does "predestine" and "call" and "choose" and "elect" to salvation. The two most widely used passages to challenge

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<sup>150</sup> Schreiner, 381-82.

<sup>151</sup> Calvin, *Hebrews and 1 and 2 Peter*, 364.

<sup>152</sup> Moo, 188.

the theology of the sovereignty of God over salvation fall short. No one of any credibility in the theological world believes that God's sovereignty makes the human being's decision to accept or reject Jesus any less real or the human any less responsible for his or her decision. Charles says it this way: "Divine sovereignty does not cancel out human freedom to make moral decisions or the need to cultivate the moral life."<sup>153</sup>

### MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO EVANGELIZE

In addition to the doctrine of God's sovereignty over salvation, the Bible also teaches that Christians are to share the good news to the world so that people might believe and be saved. Though many see these doctrines as paradoxical, the following presents both doctrines as being biblical and true.

#### **Acts 1:8**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The book of Acts is traditionally called "The Acts of The Apostles." This title can be deceiving. The Apostles only act as the Holy Spirit gives them power and boldness to act. Acts starts out with a resurrected Jesus spending time with, eating with, and teaching His disciples. In the first five verses of the book, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would soon come upon them. His followers then asked Him a question, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>154</sup> "The apostles evidently maintained their interest in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God

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<sup>153</sup> Charles, 408.

<sup>154</sup> Acts 1:6b (ESV)

realized in the restoration of Israel's national independence."<sup>155</sup> What the Apostles did not realize was that Jesus didn't have the national independence of Israel in mind. The Apostles, though they thought they had Jesus' plan figured out, were gravely mistaken. John Calvin says, "There are as many errors in this question as there are words."<sup>156</sup>

Jesus' response to the Apostles' misguided question is where we find one of His strongest commands to evangelize in all of Scripture. Jesus said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."<sup>157</sup> Instead of politicizing the Kingdom of God "he 'depoliticized it' with a call to a worldwide mission."<sup>158</sup>

What the Apostles would receive is much greater than any political power, as Bruce points out:

Instead of political power which had once been the object of their ambitions, a power far greater and nobler would be theirs. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus assured them, they would be vested with heavenly power – that power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching made effective.<sup>159</sup>

Jesus makes clear that the "Spirit is tied to power (δύναμις), which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God's work

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<sup>155</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Book Of The Acts*, The New International Commentary On the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 35.

<sup>156</sup> John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 1:29.

<sup>157</sup> Acts 1:7-8 (ESV)

<sup>158</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 84-85.

<sup>159</sup> Bruce, 36.



through Jesus.”<sup>160</sup> “Δύναμις” “is used with reference to miracles in 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 8:13; 10:38; 19:11, but in 4:33; 6:8-10 it includes power to speak boldly.”<sup>161</sup> Bock says, “the Spirit will give them the capability to articulate their experience with boldness. Acts 2 shows the initial enablement of Peter, who is transformed from the person who denied Jesus three times.”<sup>162</sup>

Jesus tells His followers that after they receive power by the Holy Spirit, they will be “His witnesses.” Jesus describes for His followers their future work. “This work would be a work of witness-bearing — a theme which is prominent in the apostolic preaching throughout Acts.”<sup>163</sup> Not only is this a prominent theme in the book of Acts, but also these are Jesus’ last words before He ascends to be with the Father. Richard Longenecker says that these words are “a direct commission from Jesus Himself — in fact, as Jesus’ last word before his ascension and, therefore, as one that is final and conclusive. All that follows in Acts is shown to be the result of Jesus’ own intent and the fulfillment of his express word.”<sup>164</sup>

What does Jesus mean by “witnesses?” What is he asking His followers to do? Polhill explains, “As eyewitnesses only they were in the position to be guarantors of the resurrection. But with its root meaning of testimony, ‘witness’ comes to have an

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<sup>160</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 63.

<sup>161</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts Of The Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 110.

<sup>162</sup> Bock, 64.

<sup>163</sup> Bruce, 36.

<sup>164</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 9: 256.

almost legal sense of bearing one's testimony to Christ."<sup>165</sup> Bock agrees that there is a legal sense to their responsibility and adds a valuable explanation of its nature:

A witness in this sense is someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation. As such, a witness is more than someone with merely subjective and personal impressions. This objectivity and fact-based quality of the witness are why the direct experience of Jesus' ministry and resurrection are required of Judas' replacement in Acts 1:21-22, a passage that shows what stands behind Luke's use of this term. Thus "witness" is a key term in Acts for those who experienced Jesus and saw him in a resurrection appearance (1:22). This experience means that they can testify directly to what God did through Jesus (Luke 24:48).<sup>166</sup>

Peterson adds, "...the implication is that the apostles have observed Christ's suffering and resurrection and can now uniquely 'give testimony' or 'bear witness' to those events and their significance in the light of Jesus' teaching..."<sup>167</sup>

Much debate exists from Jesus' words "and to the end of the earth." Was Rome the Apostles ultimate goal or did He envision something bigger? Though space does not allow for deeper study into different views, Bock summarizes:

The phrase 'end of the earth,' then, is geographic and ethnic in scope, inclusive of all people and locals... The kingdom message will move out gradually and encompass all. The church's call is to be missionary in direction and eschatological in focus. The world is the end goal, pointing to complete deliverance that drives the present mission and gives it focus.<sup>168</sup>

A crucial question is, "Do Jesus' words apply to Christians today?" F.F. Bruce answers:

In Acts we do not find apostolic succession in the ecclesiastical sense, not a succession of orthodox tradition, but a succession of witness to Christ, an apostolic testimony in Jerusalem to the self-styled leaders of Israel until they finally reject it, and an apostolic testimony from Jerusalem to Rome and the

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<sup>165</sup> Polhill, 86.

<sup>166</sup> Bock, 64.

<sup>167</sup> Peterson, 111.

<sup>168</sup> Bock, 65-66.

Gentile world of Luke's own day.<sup>169</sup>

Longenecker says that "this commission lays an obligation on all Christians and comes to us as a gift with a promise."<sup>170</sup> Christians who read these words today "are left with an implied challenge to continue the work of worldwide testimony to Jesus."<sup>171</sup>

The same men that Jesus taught about God's sovereignty in John 6 and 10 are hearing Him teach that they must be "witnesses" to the world to what they have seen with their own eyes. Jesus' command ought not cause someone to dispute the biblical teachings of God's sovereignty over salvation.

### **Romans 10:13-15**

"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans nine is filled with language of God's sovereign choice over salvation. Paul, in the last four verses of chapter nine, speaks of the unbelief of his fellow Jews. They have stumbled over the gospel of righteousness because they did not pursue it by faith, but instead believed wrongly that works could attain it.

Paul then passionately petitions about his fellow Jews, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."<sup>172</sup> In the 12 verses that follow, Paul maintains that this salvation is open to everyone, without exception, exclusively through belief in Christ. He argues that, "Christ is the end of

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<sup>169</sup> Bruce, 36.

<sup>170</sup> Longenecker, 256.

<sup>171</sup> Peterson, 113.

<sup>172</sup> Romans 10:1 (ESV)

the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”<sup>173</sup> Paul concludes his thought in verse 13 by quoting Joel 2:32, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The context of Paul’s closing of chapter nine and opening of chapter ten have been debated thoroughly. For centuries commentators and theologians have debated over whether Paul has the Jews or the Gentiles in mind when he wrote these words. Douglas Moo asks the question, “But of whom is Paul speaking in this paragraph?”<sup>174</sup> He then answers and explains, “He explicitly identifies ‘Israel’ as the object of his criticism in v. 19. But up to that point, Paul has used indefinite third person plural verbs, making it likely that at least in vv. 14-15, and perhaps in all of vv. 14-18, he is thinking of people generally.”<sup>175</sup> Morris points out that both views could make sense and “great names can be cited for either view.”<sup>176</sup>

Schreiner agrees but states in the negative:

Both of these interpretations should be rejected as too specific, for the previous verses (vv. 11-13) have emphasized that “all” (πάς) those who believe and call on the Lord shall be saved. Verse 12 includes specifically both Jews and Gentiles within the realm of the “all,” and thus the vagueness of the third person verbal forms in verses 14-15 should be preserved so that the verbs are not limited to either Jews or Gentiles.<sup>177</sup>

From the evidence cited, the understanding is that Paul’s words in vv. 14-15 are regarding the Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, with “everyone” in mind, Paul proceeds with asking four rhetorical questions.

Paul, based on his previous argument that “any who believe will be saved,”

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<sup>173</sup> Romans 10:4 (ESV)

<sup>174</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 662.

<sup>175</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 662.

<sup>176</sup> Morris, *Romans*, 389.

<sup>177</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 566.

begins a new argument containing four parallel rhetorical questions “each beginning with the interrogative ‘how.’”<sup>178</sup> Paul’s questions each “anticipate a negative answer.”<sup>179</sup> The questions intend to be read quickly with the implied answer of “they won’t” for each. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?” The implied answer is, “they wont.” “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” The implied answer is, “they wont.” “And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” The implied answer is, “they wont.” “And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” The implied answer is, “they wont.” Paul creates “a connected chain of steps that must be followed if a person is to be saved (v. 13).”<sup>180</sup> John MacArthur explains this way:

With simple, progressive logic Paul establishes that only those who call upon the name of the Lord can be saved, only those who have believed in Him can call upon Him, only those who have heard of Him can believe in Him, only those who have a preacher can rightly hear of Him, and finally, no preacher can preach the true gospel who has not been sent by God.<sup>181</sup>

Overall, the implications to ministry are clear: “Those who call on the Lord in a saving way must believe in him, but this belief is not possible apart from the hearing of a message that someone preaches. And a message is not preached unless one is sent by God.”<sup>182</sup>

Kruse says that Paul’s rhetorical questions “clearly imply that people cannot call on one in whom they have not believed, cannot believe in one of whom they

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<sup>178</sup> Moo (Romans), 663.

<sup>179</sup> Kruse, 417.

<sup>180</sup> Moo (Romans), 663.

<sup>181</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 83.

<sup>182</sup> Schreiner (Romans), 568.

have not heard, cannot hear unless someone preaches to them, and cannot preach unless they are sent.”<sup>183</sup> Stott says that, “the essence of Paul’s argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved.”<sup>184</sup>

God has chosen people who will respond positively to the Gospel and He has also provided a way for those people to hear through the preaching of the good news. This preaching is not exclusively what happens on a Sunday morning at church, as Morris cautions, “We should not confuse preach here with the modern Sunday morning sermon.”<sup>185</sup> He does, however, add this parenthesis: “that (Sunday morning preaching), too, may be included in Paul’s meaning, but it is not the kind of thing that he has primarily in mind.”<sup>186</sup> Paul uses the word “κηρύσσω” for “preaching”, which carries a tight semantic range of preaching, heralding, or proclaiming. The differences in these three possibilities are minimal. This word “always carries the basic meaning ‘to cry out loud,’ ‘to proclaim,’ ‘to declare,’ ‘to announce.’”<sup>187</sup> This text is not only a call for preachers, but a call for everyone to tell of the good news of Jesus Christ. However, the implication for preachers is obvious. For the pastor who preaches to his congregation regularly, this is a call and command to use that time, at least in part, to share the Gospel message with the non-Christians in attendance.

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<sup>183</sup> Kruse (Romans), 417.

<sup>184</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 286.

<sup>185</sup> Morris, 390.

<sup>186</sup> Morris, 390.

<sup>187</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, “κηρύσσω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 697.

It is irrefutable that the Bible tells Christians that they have a responsibility to proclaim the good news to the world. This responsibility is no different for the preacher. There is even a greater responsibility placed on the preacher, as one having a large and weekly platform to proclaim the message of salvation to the world. It is near-sighted, if not ignorant; to use the sovereignty of God over salvation as an excuse to not evangelize to the lost.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is in control of salvation. That He not only saves, but also calls, draws, and makes it possible for one to respond positively to the invitation. The Bible also clearly teaches that God uses the mode and means of gospel proclamation to communicate the good news for people to respond to. These two truths are not opposites, but are in fact, supporting realities. God has called some to Himself and those whom He has called will hear the invitation through the preaching of His Word.

### BRIDGING THE GAP

There are many passages that communicate God's sovereignty over salvation and there are also many passages that teach of man's responsibility to evangelize, but there is one passage in Scripture that clearly brings these two realities together. Paul makes a comment in his second letter to Timothy that indicates that he, not only believed both of these doctrines, but that he understood how they worked together.

## 2 Timothy 2:10

“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

The tone of Paul’s second letter to Timothy is different from the first. His second letter to his young disciple is “more personal, as in the address to Timothy as Paul’s ‘beloved’ son.”<sup>188</sup> This special tone is what Kostenberger calls a “reminiscent mood.”<sup>189</sup> Paul was in prison and was sensing that he was getting very close to death. In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul says, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.”

In Chapter two, Paul encourages Timothy to “share in suffering” (2:3). He knew that his time was coming to an end and wanted Timothy to hear his last thoughts. Paul was recalling his past suffering while facing present pain. He wanted Timothy to know that he would suffer as well. In verse nine, Paul says, “... I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” Paul’s sober testimony set up the theologically rich declaration that he made next.

“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”<sup>190</sup> It is because Paul knows that the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ are alive and active, that he endures suffering, including what he currently perceives as immanent death. His words capture both his awareness of God’s election and the confession that he is

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<sup>188</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 263.

<sup>189</sup> Andreas Kostenberger, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 12: 565.

<sup>190</sup> 2 Timothy 2:10 (ESV)



working to make sure that God's elect hear the gospel and believe. Paul obviously does not struggle with this seeming paradox.

Who are the "elect?" Kelly says, "Here God's chosen denotes those whom God's eternal predestination has chosen to receive salvation, but who have not yet responded to his call."<sup>191</sup> Marshall disagrees, and says, "to categorize unbelievers as 'the elect' curiously excludes those who are already believers."<sup>192</sup> Towner agrees with Marshall and says that the Reformed view of the elect "reflects an overly narrow view of the concept of salvation, which in Paul's theology is a process initiated by proclamation and conversion but not concluded until the Eschaton."<sup>193</sup> For Towner and Marshall, limiting this passage's reach to those who were chosen to believe and will believe, but do not yet believe, is too narrow a view. Rather, they believe that, "the allusion here is to people who are already believers who must be helped to persevere to the end."<sup>194</sup>

The Arminian understanding, however, does not take into account Paul's words "they may also obtain." Paul is speaking of something that he has already obtained. If glorification is in mind and Paul is only speaking of enduring until the end and reaching eternal glory, then Paul could not say with confidence that he has reached it yet. By Paul's assertion that he has already obtained it, he is making it clear that justification is in mind. It is apparent that glorification is also in mind

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<sup>191</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960), 178.

<sup>192</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary, ed. J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, and G.N. Stanton (London, ENG: T & T Clark, 1999), 737.

<sup>193</sup> Towner, 504.

<sup>194</sup> Marshall, 737.

since he uses the words “eternal glory.” It would however, be too limited to assume that he only meant glorification.

Knight feels very confident with the Reformed understanding of the word “ἐκλεκτός” (elect), as he says, “The word thus represents ‘those whom God has chosen from the generality of mankind and drawn to himself.’”<sup>195</sup> Kostenberger agrees, “Paul here clearly states, his belief that God has chosen certain ones for salvation and that it is his duty to preach the gospel and suffer for it so that such people ‘too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.’”<sup>196</sup> In light of the research already offered, the position of this thesis is that the elect that Paul speaks of are the same as he has spoken of in Ephesians and Romans. Paul’s point is that he has endured all these things because he knows that the elect, those whom God has chosen to respond positively to the gospel, need to hear the gospel (Rom. 10).

It can become confusing to reconcile God’s sovereignty to elect some to salvation and the need for gospel preaching. Paul makes it clear, however, in 2 Timothy and Romans 10:13-15, that preaching the good news to all the world is an indispensable part of God’s Salvific plan. Stott says:

We notice in passing that the doctrine of election does not dispense with the necessity of preaching. On the contrary, it makes it essential. For Paul preaches and suffers for it (literally) ‘in order that’ they ‘may obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory.’ The elect obtain salvation in Christ not apart from the preaching of Christ but by means of it.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 399.

<sup>196</sup> Kostenberger, 577.

<sup>197</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 62-63.

Paul was extremely aware that God had chosen some for salvation and also that he was God's chosen instrument to accomplish God's elect hearing the gospel. Knights says, "Paul believes that God has chosen from the generality of mankind some whom he will draw to himself; therefore, he is willing to give himself to be the instrument through whom they hear the gospel, are so drawn to God, and obtain salvation."<sup>198</sup> Paul is confident in his suffering because he knows that God has chosen to save the elect through hearing the gospel. Mounce says, "He is willing to do this because of what is at stake, the elect."<sup>199</sup> Paul's philosophy is the opposite of many Christians' philosophy who are motivated to present the gospel to the world because they believe God has given everyone the equal opportunity to respond. They therefore believe that they must get to work or else people will perish. However, Paul is preaching Christ crucified because he knows Christ has promised to save some. So Paul confidently suffers for the gospel because of God's promise to save His elect.

After reviewing the appropriate passages, it is clear that God is in control of salvation. It takes too much explaining and dancing around different texts to conclude anything other than "God has chosen some to be saved; He will draw them to Himself and they will believe and be saved."

This theological truth does not excuse Christians from the biblical command to evangelize. Scripture teaches that not only is it the Christian's responsibility to evangelize, but is the preacher's job to preach the gospel. These two doctrines need not be seen as enemies, but as friends, as partners. Though these doctrines might

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<sup>198</sup> Knight, 399.

<sup>199</sup> William D. Mounce, 514.

seem to disagree, the Christian, and particularly the preacher, need to live in the tension. Paul made his readers aware that he lived in the tension when he said, "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."<sup>200</sup>

Though many see these theologies as paradoxical, preachers need to live in obedience to Scripture. In light of the sufficient evidence given, preachers need to believe in the sovereignty of God and teach it to their people, because the Bible does. They also must use the pulpit as a means of sharing the gospel with the lost. Far too many preachers abandon one for the other. Preachers need to live in the tension, allow the tension, and like Paul, minister with confidence. In the next chapter, extra-biblical evidence will be examined. Looking to professors and pastor's thoughts and comments, both past and present, on this seeming paradox should bring more clarity to the study.

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<sup>200</sup> 2 Timothy 2:10 (ESV)

## Chapter 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes current and historical literature in four areas that contribute to the study of Calvinistic-Evangelistic preaching. The first section is an explanation of Hyper-Calvinism and the dangers that emerge. The second section will estimate the confidence in evangelism that occurs as a result of believing in the sovereignty of God over salvation. The third section will explain how the sovereignty of God over salvation and evangelism work together. The fourth section will look at the historical example of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a true Calvinist-Evangelist.

### HYPER-CALVINISM

As Calvinism has gained more traction in the past decade, Hyper-Calvinism has been once again a common and imminent threat. Iain Murray wrote in 1995, “At the present time, when evangelical Calvinism is again being recovered in many parts of the earth, the danger of Hyper-Calvinism is once more a possibility...”<sup>1</sup> Greg Dutcher points out how popular this “New Calvinism” has become:

Here are the two most important things you need to know about the rise of the New Calvinism: it’s not new and it’s not about Calvin. Of course, some of the conferences are new. The John Piper-packed iPods are new. The neo-reformed blog blitz is new. The ideas, however, are not.<sup>2</sup>

Hyper-Calvinism, simply explained, is when the doctrines that Augustine, Calvin and

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<sup>1</sup> Iain Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Greg Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology from the Inside* (Cruciform Press, 2012), 204-207, Kindle.

Spurgeon (among many others) expounded from Scripture have unbiblical features added to them. A popular component of Hyper-Calvinism says that because God is sovereign over the salvation of individuals, it renders evangelism unnecessary. Iain Murray explains:

Gospel preaching for Hyper-Calvinists means a declaration of the facts of the gospel but nothing should be said by way of encouraging individuals to believe that the promises of Christ are made to them particularly until there is evidence that the Spirit of God has begun a saving work in their hearts convicting them and making them 'sensible' of their need.<sup>3</sup>

Murray also points out that this unfortunate belief is wide-spread, "in surveying the Christian scene at large, there is some justification for the idea that Calvinistic belief hinders evangelistic passion."<sup>4</sup> Gordon Olson agrees and explains, "It seems clear that overemphasis on God's sovereignty and under emphasis upon man's responsibility was the major factor in their inaction."<sup>5</sup> Charles Spurgeon said, "There are some men who preach this doctrine who are doing ten thousand times more harm than good."<sup>6</sup> If Hyper-Calvinists are doing more harm than good, then why do they continue to believe this dangerous doctrine?

J.I. Packer estimates, "In their zeal to glorify God by acknowledging his sovereignty in grace, and by refusing to imagine that their own services are indispensable to him, they are tempted to lose sight of the church's responsibility to

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<sup>3</sup> Murray, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Iain Murray, forward to *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), xv.

<sup>5</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: An Inductive Mediate Theology of Salvation* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Publishers, 2002), 380.

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990) 4: 341.

evangelize.”<sup>7</sup> It seems that a very real temptation exists for Calvinists to preach doctrine rather than the good news of the gospel. Dutcher appropriately asks Calvinists:

Did God sovereignly open up our hearts so we could go out into all the world and talk exclusively about what opened up our hearts? Or did he regenerate our lifeless souls in order that we would proclaim the excellencies (plural!) of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (see 1 Peter 2:9)? Some Calvinists seem to think we were saved to proclaim God’s sovereignty rather than God himself.<sup>8</sup>

The difference between Hyper-Calvinism and true Calvinism is clear, but sometimes unacknowledged. Spurgeon differentiates between the two:

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and, I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup>

True Calvinism does not believe less than Hyper-Calvinism. It does not believe in a less sovereign God. It believes in a sovereign God and more. True Calvinism believes that God is completely sovereign over salvation and also that the biblical commands to evangelize endure. But how can this be? “How could one be staunchly Calvinistic and passionately evangelistic?”<sup>10</sup> Bill Welzien asks an important question, “What do you think? Can someone be seriously Calvinistic and at the same time seriously evangelistic? Does a belief in the absolute sovereignty of God take the wind out of

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<sup>7</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 266-267, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism*, 508-512.

<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *A Defense of Calvinism*, (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2010) 188-190, Kindle.

<sup>10</sup> Steven J. Lawson, *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2012), xix.

the sails of evangelism?"<sup>11</sup>

John Starke says, "So long as some Christians have called themselves Calvinists, other Christians have probably alleged that Calvinists care little about evangelism, missions, and church planting."<sup>12</sup> Welzien agrees and adds, "Many people think that 'Calvinist evangelist' is an oxymoron."<sup>13</sup> J.I. Packer explains this alleged oxymoron this way: "The supposition seems to be that you cannot evangelize effectively unless you are prepared to pretend while you are doing it that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is not true."<sup>14</sup>

Roger Olson, in his book titled *Against Calvinism* says,

I believe Calvinism has too many and too profound conundrums that have no apparent solutions. They even appear at times like contradictions although they are not formal, logical contradictions. The most obvious and frequently mentioned one, even by Calvinists, is the combination of divine absolute sovereignty and human responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

Walls and Dongell agree and add that within Calvinism "The consequences for evangelistic preaching are profound indeed."<sup>16</sup> They go on to explain why the consequences of Calvinism are such a hindrance to true evangelism:

On the surface, Calvinism appears to undermine motivation for evangelism. For if God has unconditionally chosen who will be saved and who will be left in their sins for eventual damnation, then surely the persons so chosen for

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<sup>11</sup> Bill Welzien, "Calvinism and Evangelism," The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, July 2001, accessed March 13, 2014,

[http://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH01/07b.html](http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH01/07b.html).

<sup>12</sup> John Starke, "John Calvin, Missionary and Church Planter," The Gospel Coalition, November 27, 2012, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/mobile/article/tgc/john-calvin-missionary-and-church-planter>.

<sup>13</sup> Starke, "John Calvin".

<sup>14</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 61-62.

<sup>15</sup> Roger E. Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 175.

<sup>16</sup> Walls and Dongell, 188.



salvation will in fact be saved. And if this is so, there is little reason for us to worry about evangelism— nothing we do or fail to do will in any way thwart God's sovereign purpose in election.<sup>17</sup>

William Estep states, "Logically Calvinism is anti-missionary."<sup>18</sup>

Hyper-Calvinism and many Arminians agree that if God is completely sovereign over salvation then there is no need to evangelize. However the response differs between these two parties. Hyper-Calvinism's response is a lack of evangelism and the Arminian response is lack of belief in God's sovereignty over salvation. Is this true? Can these two doctrines not coexist?

#### CONFIDENCE IN EVANGELISM

"Does Calvinism take the wind out of the sails of evangelism?"<sup>19</sup> Welzien answers:

Properly understood and sincerely believed, it does exactly the opposite. Believing that God has a sovereign plan to bring all his elect to himself actually encourages evangelism. It gives confidence to us, God's people, to fulfill our God-given responsibility to spread his gospel. We know that our labor in the Lord is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58)!<sup>20</sup>

These two biblical doctrines can, and often do, seem paradoxical. It has caused Hyper-Calvinists to stop evangelizing and some Arminians to soften the doctrine of election. For Paul it seems to have had the opposite effect:

Have you heard it said that the doctrine of God's choosing some for salvation (the doctrine of election) undercuts evangelism? It didn't in Paul's life. As he later wrote to Timothy, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). Romans 10 contains Paul's clearest and most impassioned plea for

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<sup>17</sup> Walls and Dongell, 191.

<sup>18</sup> "Doctrines Lead to 'Dunghill,' Prof Warns," William R. Estep, *Texas Baptist Standard*, March 26, 1997, accessed July, 5, 2013, <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj29/article1.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Welzien, "Calvinism and Evangelism."

<sup>20</sup> Bill Welzien, "Calvinism and Evangelism."

Christians to send out people to preach the gospel because it is the only way people are saved; but this impassioned plea comes after what many consider Paul's plainest teaching about the doctrine of election in Romans 9. He didn't see any inconsistency that a sovereign God is also a saving God. Somehow, Paul found the doctrine of God's sovereignty an encouragement in his evangelism.<sup>21</sup>

The sovereignty of God over salvation should not hinder or discourage evangelism, but instead should drive confidence. The motive for evangelism is to see lost souls saved, but an added drive is assurance that some people will respond in faith. J.I. Packer says, "The sovereignty of God in grace gives us our only hope of success in evangelism."<sup>22</sup> He also says, "Apart from [the sovereignty of God], there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful."<sup>23</sup> Spurgeon agrees that the sovereignty of God is the only thing that produces success in evangelism: "Rejoice that it cannot fail. Let us believe without reserve, and then go straight ahead with the preaching of the Word."<sup>24</sup>

The sovereignty of God over salvation is the starting point of and reason for evangelism. Steven Lawson, as a young Christian searching out these truths said, "I finally understood that my Reformed theology was not a hindrance but a launching pad for evangelism."<sup>25</sup> Greg Dutcher adds a lengthy explanation of the motive that the sovereignty of God gives us in evangelism:

Are we going to let a misreading of John Calvin's human arguments made more than 1400 years after the last letter of the New Testament was penned so alter our reading of infallible Scripture that our practice of evangelism is fundamentally opposed to that of the apostles and direct disciples of Jesus?

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 104, Kindle.

<sup>22</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 934.

<sup>23</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 937-938.

<sup>24</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1992), 141.

<sup>25</sup> Lawson, xx.

What a powerful, practical concept—there are elect people out there. Some have been spiritually reborn, but many are still waiting to be spiritually reborn. Yet because the latter group is elect, we have a guarantee: there will always be sinners who respond to the free offer of the gospel and obtain the salvation they have been chosen to receive! How do we know they are still out there? Because Christ has not yet returned, which means that the work—which includes our work—is not yet complete. The Bible is clear: We know that God is sovereign. We know that he has elected people to be saved. We know that he is at work in the earth toward that certain goal. And we know that he wants to use us to help make it happen.<sup>26</sup>

The truth that God elects some to salvation should add an evident confidence to our evangelism. If the Bible tells us that there are elect people in the world and that God's plan won't fail, then evangelism is certain to be successful. Not because we have eloquent speech or great strategies, but because God will certainly triumph in His plan to save His elect. The sovereignty of God over salvation should give Christians confidence in evangelism. It should be a springboard, not a speed bump.

It seems clear that Paul trusted in the sovereignty of God for his evangelistic efforts. J.I. Packer gives an example from Paul's ministry:

There was a time at Corinth when things were hard; there had been some converts, certainly, but opposition was mounting and even Paul, the dauntless, was wondering whether it was worth persevering there. "And," we are told, "the Lord [Jesus] said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people'" (Acts 18:9-10).<sup>27</sup>

Paul's directive was to go on, preaching the gospel, and not only would God handle the results, but also that God had specific people in that particular city who were among His elect. Mark Dever says:

God was telling Paul that the fact that God had elected some (in this case,

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<sup>26</sup> Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism*, 704-720.

<sup>27</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 1030-1033.

many, in Corinth) for salvation meant that Paul should continue preaching so that the elect would be saved. Paul knew that God had willed Paul's evangelism to bear such good fruit.<sup>28</sup>

Packer concludes, "Thus the sovereignty of God in grace gave Paul hope of success as he preached to deaf ears, and held up Christ before blind eyes, and sought to move stony hearts."<sup>29</sup>

Paul endured much suffering and hardship in his ministry. He was beaten and imprisoned multiple times and yet did not change course. Why? Dutcher answers:

Many answers could be supplied: the glory of God, the joy of seeing sinners converted, the overriding passion of his life's purpose. Certainly we could find passages to support all of these motivations. One motivation, however, is too often overlooked. Paul knew there were elect sinners waiting to be converted to Christ. He knew that his sovereign God had a massive number of people chosen before time to be adopted into the family of the redeemed. And he wanted to see it happen. This "Calvinism" motivated Paul.<sup>30</sup>

A belief in God's sovereignty over salvation should not effect conviction in the command to evangelize; At least not in the negative. God's electing purposes should positively influence our evangelistic passion. Those who hold the Calvinistic view of salvation should hold a confidence that their work in evangelism cannot fail.

Everyone who hears the good news of Jesus Christ and has been elected and called to respond will believe and be saved. The Christian's effort in evangelism can be accompanied by confidence and peace. J.I. Packer asks the question, "Where does the patience come from that is so indispensable for evangelistic work?"<sup>31</sup> He answers:

From dwelling on the fact that God is sovereign in grace and that his word does

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<sup>28</sup> Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 1035-1036.

<sup>30</sup> Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism*, 689-696.

<sup>31</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 1078.

not return to him void; that it is he who gives us such opportunities as we find for sharing our knowledge of Christ with others, and that he is able in his own good time to enlighten them and bring them to faith.”<sup>32</sup>

## WORKING TOGETHER

Two questions that must be answered are: 1) Does practicing evangelism negate the sovereignty of God? 2) Does the sovereignty of God make evangelism futile? In answering the first question, one must always remember that no matter who is saved from evangelistic efforts, it is God who saves. Packer says, “While we must always remember that it is our responsibility to proclaim salvation, we must never forget that it is God who saves.”<sup>33</sup> Christians ought never mistake their evangelistic efforts, even if they come with success, to be the power by which one is saved. Packer calls our evangelistic work: “the instrument that [God] uses for this purpose, but the power that saves is not in the instrument: it is in the hand of the One who uses the instrument.”<sup>34</sup>

Spurgeon, not wishing that any should misunderstand his evangelistic efforts, said, “It is not our way of putting the gospel, nor our method of illustrating it, which wins souls, but the gospel itself does the work in the hands of the Holy Ghost, and to Him we look for the thorough conversion of men.”<sup>35</sup> A correct understanding of evangelism is that it is, and only is, an instrument that God uses as He sees fit to bring about the result that He desires. Evangelism is not a method to force the hand of God.

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<sup>32</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 1079-1081.

<sup>33</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 215-216.

<sup>34</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 217-218.

<sup>35</sup> Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*, 130.

If evangelism does not force the hand of God, then the appropriate next question is: does the sovereignty of God make evangelism futile? If God has already elected some for salvation, and we can't force his hand, then why evangelize? In Romans 10 Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions to which the implied answer to all is "they won't." In Romans 10:15, Paul asks, "How are they to hear without someone preaching?" The implied answer is "they won't." Paul concludes with "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"<sup>36</sup> Even God's elect have to hear the good news in order to believe.

J.I. Packer responds to the question of futility this way: "The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the necessity of evangelism. Whatever we may believe about election, the fact remains that evangelism is necessary, because no man can be saved without the gospel."<sup>37</sup> Packer also cautions all Christians who may be tempted to neglect the command to evangelize because of their belief in God's sovereign election:

Christ's command means that we all should be devoting all our resources of ingenuity and enterprise to the task of making the gospel known in every possible way to every possible person. Unconcern and inaction with regard to evangelism are always, therefore, inexcusable. And the doctrine of divine sovereignty would be grossly misapplied if we should invoke it in such a way as to lessen the urgency, and immediacy, and priority, and binding constraint, of the evangelistic imperative. No revealed truth may be invoked to extenuate sin. God did not teach us the reality of his rule in order to give us an excuse for neglecting his orders.<sup>38</sup>

Practicing evangelism does not repudiate the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of God does not render evangelism useless. God has elected individuals

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<sup>36</sup> Romans 10:15 (ESV)

<sup>37</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 851-853.

<sup>38</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 278-282.

to salvation and commanded those who already believe to be a part of the process of bringing the good news to the elect. Packer articulates, "The God of the Bible is both Lord and Lawgiver in his world; he is both man's King and man's Judge. Consequently, if we would be biblical in our outlook, we have to make room in our minds for the thoughts of divine sovereignty and of human responsibility to stand side by side."<sup>39</sup>

The Apostle Paul seemed to have no difficulty considering the sovereignty of God and evangelism. Dutcher points out, "...if we need proof that [Paul] could believe 100 percent in predestination and 100 percent in evangelism, here it is: 'I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory' (2 Timothy 2:10)."<sup>40</sup> Additionally, a close look at Paul's argument in Romans 9 and 10 shows his absolute confidence with the two doctrines. Peterson and Williams say:

Paul thus sets God's absolute sovereignty (Romans 9) side by side with genuine freedom (Romans 10). Notice that sovereignty and freedom don't cancel each other out. The fact that God is in control (Romans 9) doesn't mean that we are puppets. Neither does human freedom (Romans 10) mean that God has relinquished control. Rather, in a way that we cannot fully comprehend, God is absolutely in control, and we are genuinely responsible.<sup>41</sup>

#### CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON: A TRUE CALVINIST-EVANGELIST

Using the historic example of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a case study does not absolve any current Calvinists from the responsibility of being true Calvinist-Evangelists. Looking at the life Spurgeon does not prove that they're no serious

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<sup>39</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 813-815.

<sup>40</sup> Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism*, 697-701.

<sup>41</sup> Peterson and Williams, 64.

balance problems within the reformed tribe today. Greg Dutcher cautions:

If somebody erroneously says, “Calvinists don’t care about the unreached,” we are poised to extol the evangelistic efforts of Whitefield or Spurgeon. But hold on a minute. That’s our “proof” that Calvinists are evangelistic? Stuff that happened hundreds of years ago? If we modern-day Calvinists were known for our zeal in sharing the gospel with the lost, we would not even need to mention these heroes of history. More importantly, the detractors of Calvinism would not even raise the issue. As people see how we relate to the unsaved—with such love and generosity—they should be surprised to learn that we believe in unconditional election and limited atonement.<sup>42</sup>

Dutcher’s point is accurate and duly noted; however there remains enormous benefit in considering how Spurgeon lived in both worlds. He was known for his staunch Calvinism and his zeal for evangelism. A look at his commitment to the balance of the two will show that not only is it possible to be a Calvinist-Evangelist, but also that one of the most well-known Calvinists of all time was exceptionally evangelistic.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon remains one of the most well known preachers of all time. He is hailed by many as the greatest preacher of nineteenth-century England and is arguably the foremost preacher of any century. He is regarded as the most widely successful expositor of modern times. He leads virtually every list of prominent preachers.<sup>43</sup> “As the Lord empowered him, his pulpit became one of the most prolific sounding boards the kingdom of God has ever known. To this day Spurgeon remains ‘the prince of preachers’...”<sup>44</sup> Before the age of the internet and podcasting, his sermons were extensively distributed throughout all the world in print. In fact, Iain Murray’s research shows:

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<sup>42</sup> Dutcher, *Killing Calvinism*, 635-642.

<sup>43</sup> Horton Davies, “Expository Preaching: Charles Haddon Spurgeon,” *Foundations*, 6 (1963), 15.

<sup>44</sup> Lawson, xv.



By 1863, Spurgeon's sermons had already sold more than eight million copies. At the time of his death in 1892, fifty million copies had been sold. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than a hundred million sermons had been sold in twenty-three languages, a figure unmatched by any preacher before or since. Today, this number has reached well over three hundred million copies.<sup>45</sup>

Spurgeon's church, The Metropolitan Tabernacle, was one of the largest churches in the world. During his time in the pulpit the church grew fast, "seating six thousand people, it accommodated one of the largest flocks in regular attendance since the days of the apostles."<sup>46</sup> During his thirty-eight year preaching ministry, "Spurgeon witnessed his congregation grow from two hundred to almost six thousand members. Over this time, he took 14,692 new members into the church, nearly eleven thousand of them by baptism."<sup>47</sup> His church grew so popular and so fast, that at one point, "Spurgeon even requested that the members not attend services once a quarter so that the unconverted might find a seat."<sup>48</sup>

When Spurgeon died in 1892, it was no small thing. Lawson records:

In all, some sixty thousand mourners paid their respects to this colossal figure. A funeral parade two miles long followed his hearse from the Tabernacle to the cemetery at Norwood, with one hundred thousand people standing along the way. Flags flew at half-staff. Shops and pubs were closed. It seemed as though a member of the royal family had died.<sup>49</sup>

His death did not slow his reputation. Increasingly more people wanted to read his sermons and other works after his death. A century after his death, there were more works in print and circulation by Charles Haddon Spurgeon than by any other

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<sup>45</sup> Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 66.

<sup>46</sup> S.M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History* (Edinburgh, SCT: Banner of Truth, 1980, 2001), 228.

<sup>47</sup> Lawson, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Lawson, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Lawson, 17.

English-speaking author. Spurgeon is the world's most widely read preacher.<sup>50</sup>

Although Spurgeon was wildly popular and remains so to this day, he was also staunchly Calvinistic. He was so Calvinistic in his theology that, "When he came to Geneva, Switzerland, he was welcomed as a second Calvin. He was urged to preach in the pulpit of the great reformer and given the chance to wear his gown, a rare honor he could not refuse."<sup>51</sup> At the opening ceremony of The Metropolitan Tabernacle, on March 18, 1861, Spurgeon said, "We believe in the five great points commonly known as Calvinism. We look upon them as being five great lamps which help to irradiate the cross."<sup>52</sup> He then went on to preach "an overview of the doctrines of grace, then had five other men preach, each addressing one of the five points of Calvinism."<sup>53</sup>

He likened Calvinism with the gospel itself, "The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach to-day, or else be false to my conscience and my God."<sup>54</sup> He didn't always like to refer to the doctrine as "Calvinism" because he believed it gave the wrong idea of where the doctrine actually originated. Spurgeon said, "I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism;

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<sup>50</sup> Tim Curnow, Eroll House, David Kingdom, Geoff Thomas, *A Marvelous Ministry* (Ligonier, PA.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), ii.

<sup>51</sup> Lawson, 12.

<sup>52</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1992), 2: 328.

<sup>53</sup> Lawson, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *A Defense of Calvinism*, 2-4.

Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.”<sup>55</sup> He thought it necessary to assure people that these teachings were nothing new. In one of his sermons, he said, “It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surly and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>56</sup> Although he wanted to make sure that everyone knew the truths of the sovereignty of God were coming from the Scriptures, he was not ashamed of the doctrine that he believed. He said, “There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it.”<sup>57</sup>

Spurgeon tells of his conversion to Calvinism in his autobiography:

When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths [the doctrine of election] in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from babe into a man—that I made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, that clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment,

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<sup>55</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *A Defense of Calvinism*, 104-105.

<sup>56</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 1: 313.

<sup>57</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *A Defense of Calvinism*, 178-180.

I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, 'I ascribe my change wholly to God.'<sup>58</sup>

There is absolutely no doubt that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was staunchly Calvinist. He never avoided teaching the sovereignty of God, but took the issue head on and made it the theme of many sermons and writings. This is however not the only way Spurgeon is remembered. His Calvinism is only half the story. He was also passionately evangelistic. When Steven Lawson started reading Spurgeon's sermons, this was his reaction: "I found message after message dripping with the biblical truths of sovereign grace. But at the same time, each message was on fire with evangelistic fervor, as Spurgeon pleaded with sinners to be saved. Never had I read anything like this."<sup>59</sup> Spurgeon was not afraid speak an exhortation on the responsibility of preachers regarding evangelism. Iain Murray records Spurgeon's words on the preacher's responsibility:

So the preacher has not done his work when he has spoken of Christ and proclaimed the historic facts of salvation. From there he must go on to urge the reception of Christ upon all men. In the name of God he must assure all of the certainty of their welcome and forgiveness on their repentance and faith.<sup>60</sup>

In a sermon, Spurgeon said, "I always feel that I have not done my duty as a preacher of the gospel if I go out of this pulpit without having clearly set before sinners the way of salvation."<sup>61</sup>

Spurgeon lived to evangelize. He commonly made it known that proclaiming

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<sup>58</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2: 164-165.

<sup>59</sup> Lawson, xix.

<sup>60</sup> Murray, 70.

<sup>61</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 44: 559.

the truths of Scripture, which includes evangelism, was his life's purpose.

I hold as firmly as any man living, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching that it is the duty of men to repent and believe and that it is the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."<sup>62</sup>

He also said:

If I was saved by a simple gospel, then I am bound to preach that same simple gospel till I die, so that others may be saved by it. When I cease to preach salvation by faith in Jesus, put me into a lunatic asylum, for you may be sure that my mind is gone.<sup>63</sup>

He often said things while preaching that caused others to question his Calvinistic commitment. Like when he said:

If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.<sup>64</sup>

He obviously didn't let his belief in God's sovereignty to blind him to the clear biblical command to make the gospel known to the whole world. He didn't only feel that this was his personal burden, but regularly exhorted his church to tell the world about Jesus. While preaching at The Metropolitan Tabernacle one Sunday morning he pleaded with his people:

The fact is, brethern, we must have conversion work here. We cannot go on as some churches do without converts. We cannot, we will not, we must not, we dare not. Souls must be converted here, and if there be not many born to Christ, may the Lord grant to me that I may sleep in the tomb and be heard of no more. Better indeed for us to die than to live, if souls be not saved.<sup>65</sup>

Although Spurgeon was an extremely popular preacher with an amazing gift

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<sup>62</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 14: 196.

<sup>63</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 26: 391.

<sup>64</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 7: 11.

<sup>65</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 7: 221.

of communication, he saw himself as more of an evangelist than simply a preacher or great communicator. He wrote in his autobiography, "I would rather be the means of saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth."<sup>66</sup> There were many preachers that did not share Spurgeon's intensity for evangelism and he was not shy in his response. Once he said from the pulpit:

How wide is this invitation! There are some ministers who are afraid to invite sinners, then why are they ministers! For they are afraid to perform the most important part of the sacred office... I preach Calvinism as high, as stern, and as sound as ever; but I do feel, and always did feel an anxiety to bring sinners to Christ.<sup>67</sup>

His comments sometimes came across as harsh:

But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to heaven, it is enough they are in covenant. They are dear enough people of God... They say it is equal whether God ordains man's life or death. They would sit still to hear men damned... They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning slight of hand.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear that Spurgeon held the truths of divine sovereignty and evangelism extremely firm. Some during his day couldn't reconcile these two truths and questioned him. He was once asked if he could reconcile these two truths, and his response was, "I wouldn't try... I never reconcile friends."<sup>69</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon had such a balanced view of these two theological truths that current pastor and theologian Steven Lawson says, "Throughout his prolific ministry, Charles Spurgeon sought to maintain the important balance the Scriptures give to divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Perhaps no preacher ever held these

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<sup>66</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1: 233.

<sup>67</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 5: 436.

<sup>68</sup> Murray, 112,120,127.

<sup>69</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 298-299.

two truths more carefully in balance.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Lawson, 61.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE CALVINIST-EVANGELIST PREACHER SEMINAR**

#### **A. Syllabus for The Calvinist-Evangelist Preacher Seminar**

##### **1. The purpose of the seminar**

With the current resurgence of Reformed theology in the Evangelical church there are two equal, but opposite mistakes that pastors and preachers make. On one end of the spectrum is Hyper-Calvinism or those that hold the doctrine of God's sovereignty over salvation firm, but deny the need for evangelism. On the other end of the spectrum is what the theologians call Arminian theology which holds to a lesser view of God's sovereignty over salvation and puts more emphasis on man's responsibility to turn to Jesus and evangelism. How do we avoid making the same mistakes that these two groups have made?

Preachers can avoid making either of these mistakes by having a correct biblical theology of salvation and evangelism. Instead of picking one side, team or tribe, the preacher must let the Bible speak for itself. Preachers of the gospel must not interpret the Bible through their own personal theological grid, but rather form their theological grid from the Scriptures. Preachers must have a correct theology of God's sovereignty and evangelism to effectively teach the saints and minister to the lost.

##### **2. The Goal of the Seminar**

The goal of the seminar is to help preachers form a conviction from Scripture regarding both God's sovereignty over salvation and God's



command to evangelize. In accomplishing this goal, there will be more preachers in the pulpit who preach more accurate and balanced doctrine, and in so doing, prepare the church for mission.

### **3. The Participants in the Seminar**

In order to keep the seminar both manageable and discussion-friendly, the size of the seminar should be between 15-30 students. Only those who are currently in a preaching ministry or those who are in school and training to be in a preaching ministry are invited to attend.

### **4. An Overview of the Seminar**

The suggested length of the seminar is two, three-hour teachings. The first session is designed to define the current problem and the exegetical work in both Calvinistic and Arminian passages. The second session will examine the biblical command to evangelize and the unity that exists between evangelism and God's sovereignty. This section will also include a presentation of the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a case study and example of a Calvinist-Evangelist preacher.

### **5. Preparation for the Seminar**

To prepare for the seminar students will read "Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God" by J.I. Packer and Steven Lawson's "The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon" to provide a foundation for studying the Bible passages and theology covered in the seminar and to familiarize themselves with Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

## **B. Seminar Outline**

**Outcome:** Seminar attendees will be able to reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelism from Scripture.

**By the end of the seminar participants will:**

1. Be able to identify the current problem in evangelicalism regarding the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility to evangelize.
2. Be able to teach, from the Bible, both God's sovereignty over salvation and man's responsibility to evangelize.
3. Be able to explain how God's sovereignty over salvation and man's responsibility to evangelize are not paradoxical.
4. Be encouraged by the life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon to teach the sovereignty of God to their congregations and to practice evangelism in their ministries.

### **Overview:**

#### **I. Introduction (30 minutes)**

- a. Identifying the problem
  - i. The current uprising of Calvinism

- ii. Why do so many preachers struggle to stay balanced?
- b. Overview of the seminar
- II. The sovereignty of God over salvation (90 minutes)**
  - a. Passages used to support the sovereignty of God<sup>1</sup>
    - i. Matthew 22:4
    - ii. John 6:44
    - iii. John 10:25-27
    - iv. Romans 9:9-16
    - v. Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12
  - b. Passages used to argue against the sovereignty of God
    - i. 1 Tim. 2:3-4
    - ii. 2 Peter 3:9
- III. Man's responsibility to evangelize (60 minutes)**
  - a. Acts 1:8
  - b. Romans 10:13-15
- IV. Bridging the gap (90 minutes)**
  - a. 2 Timothy 2:10
  - b. Confidence in evangelism
- V. The life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (60 minutes)**
  - a. Spurgeon's reputation

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<sup>1</sup> These passages are thoroughly exegeted in chapter two as a resource for anyone teaching the seminar to use as reference.

- b. Spurgeon's Calvinism
- c. Spurgeon's evangelism

## **VI. Question and Answer time (30 minutes)**

### **Teaching Notes:**

#### **I. Introduction**

The seminar begins with a brief introduction of yourself and a chance for everyone in the seminar to introduce themselves. Their introduction should include where they pastor and what denomination or "theological tribe" their church fits into. During these self-introductions, it is helpful if you write the differing denominations or "theological tribes" represented in the class on a white board and explain historically where they fit in the Calvinism/Arminianism debate.

#### **a. Identifying the problem (pg. 1-4)<sup>2</sup>**

##### **i. The current uprising of Calvinism?**

Explain the two sides of the spectrum and the current uprising of Calvinism.

In 2009, *Time magazine* featured a story called the "10 ideas that are changing the world right now." The subheading of the article was "The global economy is being remade before our eyes. Here's what's on the horizon." The ten ideas included things like: "Jobs are the new assets," "Recycling the suburbs," "Reinstating the interstate," and "Africa, business destination." To most people's shock, tucked into these "10 ideas" was "The New Calvinism."

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<sup>2</sup> All page numbers in the teaching notes refer to page numbers in this thesis (from chapters 1-3).

“What does Calvinism have to do with changing the world... at least as far as Time Magazine is concerned?”

David Van Biema wrote:

“Calvinism is back, and not just musically. John Calvin’s 16th century reply to medieval Catholicism’s buy-your-way-out-of-purgatory excesses is Evangelicalism’s latest success story, complete with an utterly sovereign and micromanaging deity, sinful and puny humanity, and the combination’s logical consequence, predestination: the belief that before time’s dawn, God decided whom he would save (or not), unaffected by any subsequent human action or decision.”<sup>3</sup>

Apparently Time Magazine saw this “comeback” of Calvinism as a force big enough to devote nearly 600 words to in their 2009 March edition.

**Question/Discussion:** Whom do you know that fits into an extreme end of the spectrum? Explain their views.

**ii. Why do so many preachers struggle to stay balanced?**

**Question/Discussion:** Why do you think so many people struggle with taking an extreme stance on the spectrum of God’s sovereignty and evangelism?

Explain that the motive for having an extreme stance on either side of the spectrum without regard for the other side comes from a temptation to fit one’s theology into a tight logical system rather than a tight theological system.

Is it okay for Calvinistic preachers who love the Doctrines of Grace to forget the command to evangelize? The difficulty often lies in the logic of

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<sup>3</sup> David Van Biema, “The New Calvinism,” *Time Magazine*, March 12th, 2009, 50.

embracing the biblical truth of Calvinism and the biblical command to evangelize.

For ages, ever since the New Testament was written, there have been mysteries that have plagued Christianity. All we want is a logical answer. All we want is for everything to make sense. All we want is for everything we are taught about God in Scripture and everything we are commanded to do by God in Scripture to fit together in perfect harmony.

For two millennia, Christians have attempted to explain this antinomy of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man and the command to evangelize. If God is totally sovereign over man's salvation, from predestining him before the foundation of the world, to calling him by the Holy Spirit, to holding him to perseverance until his day of glory, then why are we commanded to share the gospel with unbelievers as if we could play a part in the process? Isn't God going to save whom He wants? If so, then should anyone waste time getting involved? Questions like these have led many to choose a logical approach over a theological approach.

A problem arises when pastors and theologians start thinking of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to evangelize as opposing forces trying to defeat each other.

**Question/Discussion:** Have any of you ever struggled or are currently struggling with seeing the harmony of these two doctrines?

#### **b. Overview of the seminar (Pg. 5)**

Explain to the class what they can expect over the next 6 hours.

- 1) A study of the biblical passages used to support the sovereignty of God over salvation.
- 2) A study of the biblical passages used to refute the sovereignty of God over salvation.
- 3) A study of the biblical passages used to prove that evangelism is a command and expectation of Christians.
- 4) A study of the bridge that closes the gap between these two seemingly paradoxical doctrines.
- 5) A study of the life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a case study of a Calvinist-Evangelist preacher.

## **II. The sovereignty of God over salvation**

This section will be very academic in nature, but must be mixed with a fair amount of discussion. There will be a lot of questions throughout this section, therefore the teacher must pay close attention to the body language of the students and stop to ask for questions when needed. The teacher might choose to walk through only two or three of these verses for the sake of time.

This section is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to focus on the primary passages in Scripture that provide evidence for this doctrine. You will examine five passages (or less if time prohibits) that support the Calvinistic (Reformed) doctrine of Election and two passages that are used to support the Arminian (Non-Reformed) view. With only 90 minutes to spend on this section, you will have to make sweeping observations on each text without looking at every commentator's view and every Greek word.

**a. Passages used to support the sovereignty of God**

**i. Matthew 22:14 (Pg. 7-11)**

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The context of this passage, as in all passages of Scripture is very important. Jesus is entering the last week of His life and has just come over the mount in His triumphal entry. He tells three parables. “These parables do not merely condemn Israel’s leaders, they express dismay over their rejection of Jesus, their long-expected Redeemer and King.”<sup>4</sup>

The parable that you will focus on is the well-known parable of the wedding feast. It is important to walk the students through these three areas in your study of this text:

1. The difference between “called” (κλητός) and “chosen” (ἐκλεκτός)
2. The difference between an “outward” call and an “inward” call.
3. The difference between Ben Witherington’s and John MacArthur’s interpretation of the passage.

**Question/Discussion:** If everyone receives and inward call in addition to the outward call, then why do some reject it and other accept it? Isn’t this what distinguishes between those who receive and those who reject the invitation?

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew: Vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2008), 280.



## **ii. John 6:44 (Pg. 12-19)**

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

While Jesus is proclaiming that He is the Son of God, the one who has been sent as the Messiah, most of the Jews don’t believe Him. Therefore, Jesus gives the reason why they don’t and won’t believe.

Important observations to make of this text:

1. Verse 37 makes the meaning of verse 44 clear.
  - a. One is in the positive and one is in the negative, which makes the statement very clear.
2. The meaning of the word “draw” (ἐλκω)
  - a. To tug or draw or compell
3. Jesus makes clear that the Father must draw a person to Himself for them to be saved.

**Question/Observation:** If Jesus’ statement is so clear, then why is there so much argument and debate on this subject? Is it possible that other parts of Scripture are leading people to not take this passage at face value?

## **iii. John 10:25-27 (Pg. 19-24)**

“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.’”

The Apostle John records seven “I am” statements of Jesus in his gospel. Jesus’ fourth “I am” statement is that He is the “Good Shepherd.” He is

the good shepherd because He lays down His life for the sheep. As in other instances when Jesus makes a public proclamation about His identity, there are mixed reactions among the people. John records, "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, 'He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"<sup>5</sup>

Jesus, as He did in John 6, explains to many of the Jews why they don't believe and are having trouble understanding that Jesus was sent from God. He tells them that they don't believe because they are not among His sheep. This can be a confusing statement to understand. In order to clear up what Jesus is teaching, these two observations should be made:

1. The difference between "You're not one of my sheep because you don't believe" and "You don't believe because you're not one of my sheep."
  - Other examples can and should be used here to prove the point.
    - "You're not in the NBA because you're short."
    - "You're not in the opera because you don't have a good voice."
    - These statements are no longer true if the order is switched.
2. These Jews had seen all the same evidence as those who believed and yet they did not believe (why didn't they?).

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<sup>5</sup> John 10:19-21 (ESV)

#### **iv. Romans 9:9-16 (Pg. 24-33)**

“For this is what the promise said: ‘About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.’ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that GOD’S purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on GOD’S part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on GOD, who has mercy.”

It is especially important to establish the context of this passage.

Context is the area where this passage finds the most conflict between Arminian and Calvinist scholars. The debate is usually regarding two questions: “Who is Paul writing about in chapter 9” and “What does Paul mean by Election?”

In chapter one Paul covers the topic of righteousness and unrighteousness. Chapter two speaks of how God deals with unrighteousness. Paul, in chapter three, explains to his readers, both Jews and Gentiles, that no one is righteous and that everyone deserves hell. In chapter four Abraham is used as an example that justification is by faith in Christ only and not by works. Paul explains that death came through Adam’s sin and life comes through Christ’s death. As a logical conclusion from chapter five, Paul tells his readers in chapter six that they are now dead to sin and alive in Christ. He helps his readers understand that they will still struggle with sin in chapter seven from an example from his own struggle to do what he wanted to do. Chapter eight encourages Christian readers in

Christ that the afterlife is to be anticipated and that nothing will interfere with their destiny in heaven with their creator:

Paul's celebration of God's faithfulness and love in 8:31-39 is a fitting end to his theological exposition. We might now expect Paul to solidify and apply his theology in a series of exhortations of the kind that often conclude his letters. But these exhortations do not begin until chapter 12. What fills the gap between the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 12 is Paul's anguished wrestling with the problem of Israel's unbelief. Is this section, then, a detour from the main line of Paul's argument in Romans, an excurses that disrupts the natural flow of the letter? Not at all. Romans 9-11 is an important and integral part of the letter... Romans 9-11, therefore, is an integral part of Paul's letter to the Romans. These chapters contribute to Paul's exposition of the gospel by showing that it provides fully for God's promises to Israel, when those promises are rightly understood.<sup>6</sup>

First, he says that God's word hasn't failed but God fulfilled his sovereign plan (Rom. 9:6-29). Second, he answers in terms of human accountability: God's word hasn't failed; rather, Israel reaped rejection from God because it sowed unbelief (Rom. 9:30-10:21). Third, Paul answers in light of God's commitment to his promises to the patriarchs: God will yet bring a Jewish remnant to himself (Rom. 11:1-32).<sup>7</sup>

Four questions for the class to discuss for a healthy examination of this text:

1. How does Paul's quoting Genesis 18:10, 14 and Exodus 33:19 add to the context and meaning of this passage?
2. What does the word "ἐκλογή" (Election) mean (Look at the two sides of the argument on pages 27-31 for direction)?
3. Are there two types of election in Scripture? Corporate and individual?

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle To The Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 547.

<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Peterson & Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 60.

4. How does one's presupposition of the word "Election" affect the way they read Romans 9?

**v. Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12 (Pg. 33-41)**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will... In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."

The reason for Paul's writing is critically important to understanding the meaning. The way to establish Paul's motive is to read the first four verses of his letter. In the first four verses he establishes:

1. He is writing to Christians in Ephesus.
2. The Ephesian Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing.

What follow these verses are the reasons that Christians should thank and praise Jesus. Paul gives the main reason for the Christian's praise towards God; "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."<sup>8</sup> The word that Paul uses for "chose" here is "ἐκλέγω" (eklégō). The aorist tense and middle voice of this verb is important to note; "indicating God's

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<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)

totally independent choice. Because the verb is reflexive it signifies that God not only chose by Himself but for Himself.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, according to Paul the first reason we should give praise to God is that he chose Christians to be Christians before the foundation of the world. F. F. Bruce says that this verse:

Denotes the divine act of election as taking place in eternity. Time belongs to the created order: believers’ present experience of the blessings bestowed by God is the fulfillment on the temporal plane of his purpose of grace toward them conceived in eternity.<sup>10</sup>

It is worth noting that Paul went way out of his way to make sure that his readers understood that the “choosing,” “selecting,” and “predestining” is all God’s purpose and plan. Lincoln points out the words that Paul used to make his point:

The number and variety of words used in this passage to describe God’s purpose is impressive: ἐκλέγω, “choose” (v.4); προορίζω “predestined,” εὐδοκία “good pleasure,” θέλημα “will” (v. 5); εὐδοκία “purposed” (v.9); κληρώω “appointed,” προορίζω “predestined,” προορίζω “plan,” θέλημα “purpose” (v. 11).<sup>11</sup>

The Calvinistic interpretation of this passage is easy to comprehend, but it is very beneficial for the students to see the Arminian response to this passage in particular. The Arminian

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<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1986), 11.

<sup>10</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle To The Colossians, To Philemon, And To The Ephesians*, The New International Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapid, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 254.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 23.

response to the Reformed interpretation of Ephesians 1:3-5 and 11 comes in two forms: 1. God's choosing/predestination was based on His foreknowledge/foresight of people's future faith in Christ. 2. God's plan to save people through Christ was predestined, not the individuals themselves.

**Discussion:** Take time to look at the Arminian rebuttals to the Calvinistic interpretation of this passage (Pg. 38-40). Then look at the Calvinistic responses to these rebuttals (Pg. 39-41). Discuss any agreements or disagreements the students might have with the rebuttals and responses.

**b. Passages used to argue against the sovereignty of God**

The point of looking at these two passages is to consider a couple passages that seem to contradict the previous five passages. Confusion is not the goal, but rather an honest concern for what the Bible says, as a whole, about God's sovereignty over salvation. The desired outcome is that within the context of the passages presented the students will see that there is no contradiction and that God is truly sovereign over salvation.

**i. 1 Tim. 2:3-4 (Pg. 41-45)**

"This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of GOD our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

When this passage is read by itself without any concern for context or the bigger picture of biblical theology it seems to indicate

that God has given the inward call to everyone and simply desires and waits to see if they will come. There is however one major error with reading this passage as a stand-alone truth. Questions to consider while studying the meaning of this passage (All questions answered on pages 43-45):

1. What does it mean that God “desires” all people to be saved?
2. Does God always get what He “desires?”
3. Is it possible for God to “desire” something without “decreeing” it to come to pass?

## **ii. 2 Peter 3:9 (Pg. 46-53)**

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

The Arminian argument largely stands or falls with this verse. Arminian scholars often cite this passage as their crux argument for their view and it is the verse that Calvinists struggle the most with. If the statement “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” is taken at face value, just as with 1 Timothy 2:3-4, without regard for context or a larger biblical theology, then the Arminian stance is easy to conclude. It is however in these two areas that the Arminian stance cannot triumph.

1. Context (Pg. 50-52)



- a. Who is Peter writing to?
  - i. 2 Peter 3:1
  - ii. 1 Peter 1:1
- b. What does “You,” “any” and “all” mean, given the context?
  - i. “You,” “any” and “all” is referring to the elect when Peter is writing to the elect.

## 2. Two “Wills” of God (Pg. 52-53)

**Discussion:** Have you ever desired to do something, but didn’t do it because it didn’t fit into your bigger plan? (buying a car or house that you can’t afford)

### III. Man’s responsibility to evangelize (60 minutes)

Proving that Scripture commands Christians to evangelize will not take much convincing. The teacher does not need to exegetically walk through each of these passages. A simple look at the context of each along with a reading of the text and application will suffice. The point of this section is to follow up the previous verses used to support God’s sovereignty over salvation with a quick recollection of God’s call to evangelize.

#### a. Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The context is important to consider in this text. There are

four specifics that need to be evaluated in the context of Acts 1:8.

1. Jesus has just risen from the grave and will ascend to the Father in heaven very soon.
2. He has gathered His disciples to give them one last commission before He ascends to heaven.
3. These words are literally the last words uttered by Jesus on earth. His ascension is described in verses 9-11.
4. The disciples immediately get to work (v. 12) after Jesus departs, with His last command in mind, to bear witness.

After looking at the context and reading the passage, the only other necessary step for teaching this text is a closer look at the word “witnesses.” What does Jesus mean by “witnesses?” What is He asking His followers to do? Polhill explains, “As eyewitnesses only they were in the position to be guarantors of the resurrection. But with its root meaning of testimony, ‘witness’ comes to have an almost legal sense of bearing one’s testimony to Christ.”<sup>12</sup> Bock agrees that there is a legal sense to this responsibility and adds a valuable explanation of the nature of responsibility that Jesus’ followers have:

A witness in this sense is someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation. As such, a witness is more than someone with merely subjective and personal impressions. This objectivity and fact-based quality of the witness are why the direct experience of Jesus’ ministry and resurrection are required of Judas’ replacement in Acts 1:21-22, a passage that shows what stands behind Luke’s use of this term. Thus “witness” is a key term in Acts for

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<sup>12</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 86.

those who experienced Jesus and saw him in a resurrection appearance (1:22). This experience means that they can testify directly to what God did through Jesus (Luke 24:48).<sup>13</sup>

**Discussion:** How does the strong legal sense of the word “witnesses” change your view on the strength and urgency of the command?

### **b. Romans 10:13-15**

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

It is critically important to point out that this chapter comes directly after Romans 9, one of the most “Calvinistic” chapters in all of Scripture. This truth proves that Paul does not see a paradox between the sovereignty of God over salvation and evangelism.

Five things are abundantly clear from this text:

1. Everyone who repents and asks for forgiveness will be saved.
2. People cannot believe unless they hear the gospel.
3. People cannot hear the gospel unless someone tells them.
4. No one can tell people unless they are sent to do so.
5. The preaching of the gospel is a beautiful thing.

The truths shared in this passage help in the process of understanding

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<sup>13</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 64.

how God uses people to accomplish what He has already decreed.

**Discussion:** If God has elected someone to salvation (given them an inward call), is it a certainty that they will one day hear the gospel and believe?

#### **IV. Bridging the gap (90 minutes)**

The best way to start this section is to ask if anyone is having a hard time with these two seemingly paradoxical doctrines. Spend some time discussing any of the student's concerns about the doctrines and how they relate to each other.

##### **a. 2 Timothy 2:10 (Pg. 63-67)**

"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

This text is crucial to our understanding of how these two doctrines work together. Paul has given us a lot of passages on the sovereignty of God as well as commanding God's people to preach the good news. This text is the single verse in the New Testament where Paul gives us insight into his thoughts on how these doctrines relate to one another.

Paul, at the very end of his life, while in prison, reveals why he has endured so much hardship. He experienced beatings and imprisonments all for the sake of the "elect" hearing the gospel and being saved. Three observations must be made from this text:

1. Paul believed that God elects some to salvation.
2. Paul had endured much persecution for the sake of the gospel.

3. Paul believes that it was his job to suffer so that those who were elect, who did not yet believe in Jesus, could hear the good news and be saved.

Paul's philosophy is the opposite of many Christian's philosophy, who are motivated to present the gospel to the world because they believe God has given everyone the equal opportunity to respond. Therefore they need to get to work or else some people will perish. However, Paul is preaching Christ crucified because he knows Christ has promised to save some. So Paul confidently suffers for the gospel because of God's promise of sovereignty over salvation. Paul bridges the seeming chasm between these two doctrines. For Paul there was no reason to compromise doctrine or practice.

**Discussion:** Does evangelism take away from God's sovereignty over salvation? Does God's sovereignty over salvation lessen the need for evangelism?

#### **b. Confidence in evangelism (Pg. 72-79)**

Does Calvinism take the wind out of the sails of evangelism? No! Rather it provides confidence in evangelism!

1. The sovereignty of God gives the Christian preacher confidence that God has elected some who **will** believe after hearing the gospel.
2. The sovereignty of God gives the Christian preacher the correct motive for evangelism. The preacher deserves none of the glory

for professions of faith; it was God who drew and opened the heart.

3. The sovereignty of God gives the Christian preacher piece in faithfully doing his job and allowing God to take care of the rest.
4. God, in His sovereignty uses evangelism as His chosen mode to get the message to the world (Romans 10:13-15).

**Discussion:** Is it possible for two biblical truths to seem logically incompatible to the human, finite mind and yet still be true?

#### **V. The life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (60 minutes)**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is perhaps history's best example of a Calvinist-Evangelist preacher. Spurgeon was the most famous preacher of his day and remains wildly popular to this day. He balanced the doctrines of election and evangelism as perfectly as has ever been done. There are many people to this day that have a hard time believing that he was a Calvinist because he was so evangelistic.

##### **a. Spurgeon's reputation (Pg. 79-81)**

1. Known as the "Prince of Preachers."
2. Over 300 million copies of Spurgeon's sermons have been sold.
3. Spurgeon's church (The Metropolitan Tabernacle in London) was one of the largest churches in the world at over 6,000 people.
4. At Spurgeon's funeral over 60,000 people paid their respects and the funeral parade stretched over two miles.

### **b. Spurgeon's Calvinism (Pg. 81-83)**

Although Spurgeon was wildly popular and remains so to this day, he was also staunchly Calvinistic. He was so Calvinistic in his theology and teaching that, when he came to Geneva, Switzerland, he was welcomed as a "second Calvin."

1. At the opening ceremony of The Metropolitan Tabernacle, on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1861, Spurgeon preached an overview on the five points of Calvinism and then had five other preachers each preach a sermon on one of the five points.
2. Spurgeon made many statements where he regarded Calvinism as the Gospel and the Gospel as Calvinism.
3. Spurgeon made it well known in his sermons that if he was going to preach Christ and Him crucified, then he must preach what is called Calvinism.
4. Spurgeon's story of coming to believe Calvinism (Pg. 82-83).

### **c. Spurgeon's evangelism (Pg. 83-86)**

His Calvinism is only half the story. He was also fervently evangelistic. In his day there were very few preachers who were balanced and he often found himself at war with both sides. Spurgeon believed it was his life's duty to preach the gospel so sinners could be saved.

1. Spurgeon told preachers that it was their responsibility to evangelize (Pg. 83-84).
2. Spurgeon said, "If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to

hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.”<sup>14</sup>

3. Spurgeon said, “If I was saved by a simple gospel, then I am bound to preach that same simple gospel till I die, so that others may be saved by it. When I cease to preach salvation by faith in Jesus, put me into a lunatic asylum, for you may be sure that my mind is gone.”<sup>15</sup>

#### **VI. Question and Answer time (30 minutes)**

As time allows give the students one last chance to ask questions and gain more clarity on the material. Conclude the class with one last summary of the two doctrines, how they work together and how either extreme is dangerous. Close the seminar in prayer.

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<sup>14</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 7: 11.

<sup>15</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 25: 391.



## **Chapter 5**

### **EVALUATIONS, INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this thesis is to provide resources for a pastor's seminar that reveals the biblical teaching on both the sovereignty of God and the urgency to evangelize. My hope is that pastors and professors in as many cities as possible would teach this seminar. We have reached a point in evangelicalism that has become too divided and tribal. Many are clinging to either the sovereignty of God or man's responsibility to evangelize. The church needs a resurgence of pastors who believe what the Bible has to say about both. The church needs pastors who teach correct theology to their congregation regarding the sovereignty of God and also needs pastors who evangelize and encourage their people to evangelize. I believe the teaching of this seminar is a great starting point for training preachers to think through these very important matters.

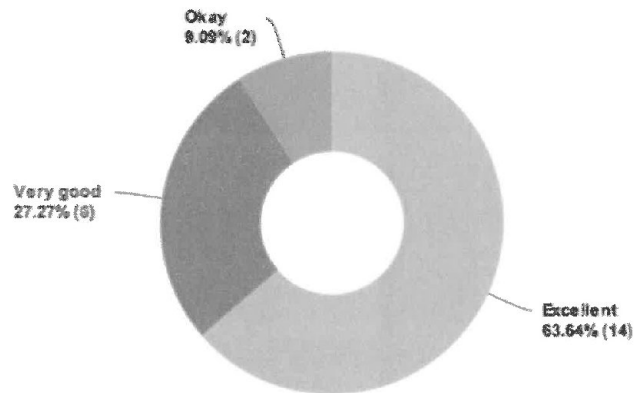
I taught this seminar over one three-hour period of time, rather than the two three-hour periods suggested in chapter four. Ideally, the seminar would be held over two three-hour periods and the teacher would therefore be able to spend adequate time in each area. The facility needed for the ideal scenario was not available; therefore the seminar was an abbreviated version. We had 34 men attend the seminar. Their current roles ranged from current preachers to pastors in training to seminary students from Phoenix Seminary.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS

At the end of the seminar the attendees were asked to fill out an online evaluation of the seminar and the teacher's knowledge and competence. These anonymous surveys were completed online via Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com). Out of the 34 men who attended the seminar, 22 men filled out the survey.

### Q1 Overall, how would you rate the seminar?

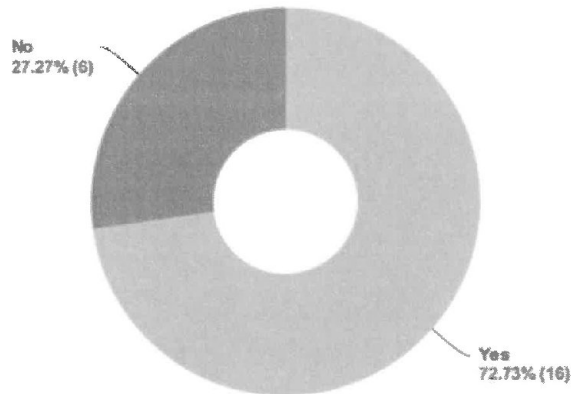
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Excellent	63.64%	14
Very good	27.27%	6
Okay	9.09%	2
Not very good	0.00%	0
Not good at all	0.00%	0
Total		22

**Q2 Have you ever been confused about how God's sovereignty and evangelism work together?**

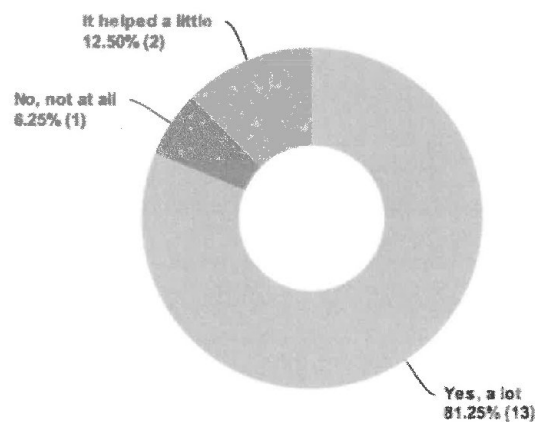
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	72.73%	16
No	27.27%	6
Total		22

**Q3 If you answered yes to the previous question, did the class help clarify and clear up some of your confusion?**

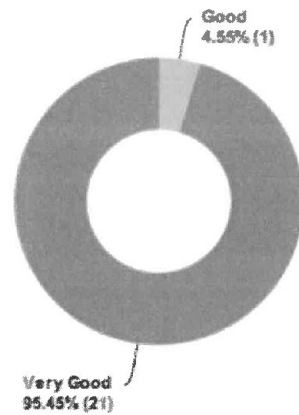
Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes, a lot	81.25%	13
No, not at all	6.25%	1
It helped a little	12.50%	2
Total		15

#### Q4 How would you rate Ryan's knowledge of the material?

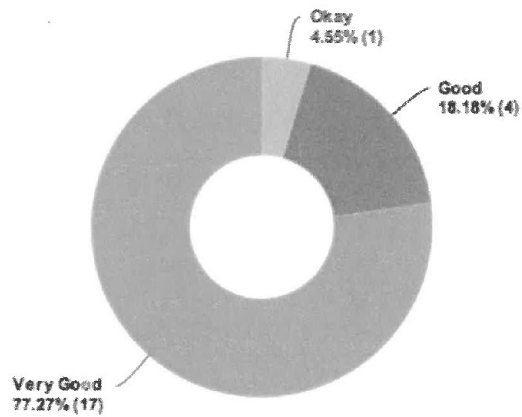
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



	Poor	Okay	Good	Very Good	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	0.00%	0.00%	4.55%	95.45%	22	3.95
	0	0	1	21		

#### Q5 How would you rate Ryan's presentation of the material?

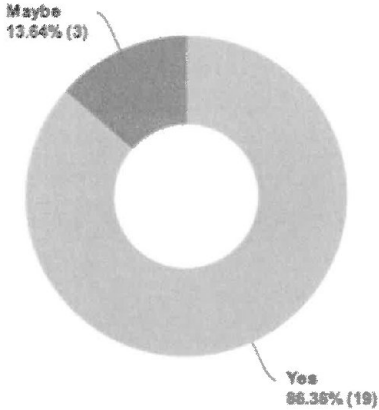
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



	Poor	Okay	Good	Very Good	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	0.00%	4.55%	18.18%	77.27%	22	3.73
	0	1	4	17		

**Q6 Would you attend another seminar on this subject?**

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	86.36%	19
No	0.00%	0
Maybe	13.64%	3
Total		22

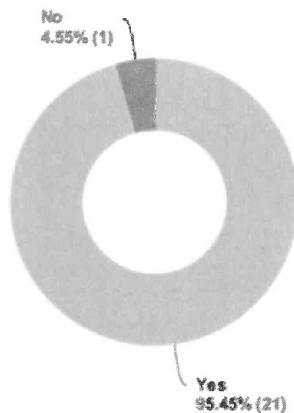
**Q7 What would you suggest be added, taken away or changed to make this seminar more effective?**

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	As a visual learner I enjoy presentations on slide/PP. The Church History timelines and summaries of the Church Fathers on PP would have been easier for me to follow. Also, a handout/summary would be helpful too.	5/8/2014 4:18 PM
2	The view on armenianism was very brief, maybe talk about that a little more	4/26/2014 5:51 PM
3	If the subject of the talk is being a Calvinist and still being an evangelist I would not spend the first hour and a half explaining why Calvinism is superior to Arminianism. The lion share of the time was spent on what should be assumed, that one is already a Calvinist, and only five minutes was spent on the actual subject.	4/25/2014 7:08 PM
4	Nothing that i can think of at the moment.	4/25/2014 9:25 AM
5	Maybe a few more verses where God is or has revealed the truth to His people.	4/24/2014 5:40 PM
6	More statements/examples of real conversations.	4/24/2014 2:36 PM
7	Possibly for the sake of time we didn't focus on the Evangelism side or what that means, but the lecture seemed more of a defense of Calvinism then its relation to Evangelism.	4/24/2014 8:03 AM
8	Luke 19	4/24/2014 1:13 AM
9	Due to time constraints I felt that Pastor Ryan had to rush through the material a little faster than he wanted to so more time should be given. There were a lot of comments and questions by the audience which also consumed more time.	4/23/2014 10:42 PM
10	more time on evangelizing	4/23/2014 9:47 PM
11	A Q&A session at the end of the presentation, to free up the speaker to cover more material.	4/23/2014 8:47 PM
12	Perhaps providing some more detail on the current theological stance of modern Arminian theologians. Namely how they support the idea of corporate election.	4/23/2014 7:37 PM
13	He did an excellent job, handling history and the Word of God	4/23/2014 5:35 PM
14	Just a bit more delineation between Calvinists points and Arminian points. Also, would have loved more time to get into the Evangelism component, and how Calvinism and Evangelism can and should co-exist.	4/23/2014 5:16 PM
15	I really enjoyed the whole thing.	4/23/2014 4:14 PM
16	As always more time and more prayer	4/23/2014 3:27 PM
17	Perhaps adding some material on what it looks like when one is Calvinist and Evangelizing.	4/23/2014 3:13 PM
18	Spend more time comparing the specifics of the Calvinist vs Arminianist views.	4/23/2014 2:03 PM
19	N/A	4/23/2014 1:20 PM
20	I think it would be good to provide a handout with references to additional study material (books, web sites, or videos) for more information or to aid independent study.	4/23/2014 1:05 PM
21	Nothing, the seminar was Excellent!!!	4/23/2014 12:52 PM
22	Less time spent on the history of the discussion and more time spent on evangelism.	4/23/2014 12:40 PM

**Q8 Do you feel better equipped now, after attending the seminar, to explain and preach the sovereignty of God and the responsibility to evangelize to others?**

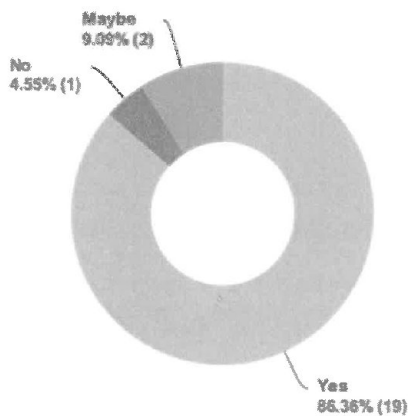
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	95.45%	21
No	4.55%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>

**Q9 Would you recommend this seminar to other preachers and pastors?**

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	86.36%	19
No	4.55%	1
Maybe	9.09%	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>

### Q10 Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 10

#	Responses	Date
1	Sorry for the delay. I'm still reeling over how you kicked mine and Dale's butt on the course. Good times. :.)	5/8/2014 4:18 PM
2	I think it is a great subject, but Ryan needs to manage his time better and not spend 95% of his allotted time explaining Calvinism.	4/25/2014 7:08 PM
3	n/a	4/25/2014 9:25 AM
4	It seems very clear. God is omnipotent. He knows all. He wrote and finished the Lamb's Book of Life, and He says go and preach and make disciples to him that knows what to do and doesn't do it, to him it is sin.	4/24/2014 5:40 PM
5	Well Done!	4/24/2014 2:36 PM
6	Enjoyed the history of the debate, specifically the fact that it has gone on since Aug and Pai, however, then why is it named after the Cai and Am?	4/23/2014 8:47 PM
7	Within the time constraints I believe Ryan gave a very good presentation of the topic from both a historical and biblical perspective.	4/23/2014 7:37 PM
8	Would love to hear the entire teaching lesson on this topic. Perhaps separate from Aspire. Was interesting, informative, thought provoking and entertaining.	4/23/2014 5:16 PM
9	More pastors should teach on these subjects	4/23/2014 3:27 PM
10	Overall the seminar was very effective in explaining the seeming paradox between evangelism and God's sovereignty. I feel that I left with a better understanding of the subject and learned new study techniques for interpreting the word in my own studies. Particularly, the idea of God having 2 wills was especially helpful in understanding the Lord's desires.	4/23/2014 1:20 PM
11	Ryan did a Excellent job of explaining the difference between the two. He has a incredible gift of knowalage when it comes to his teaching and getting the message across. Excellent.	4/23/2014 12:52 PM
12	Thank! I have always struggled at answering these questions when people asked. This helps a lot!	4/23/2014 12:40 PM



## INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After teaching the seminar and reading through the survey responses there are two main insights that will form two recommendations. The first insight is that the class needs to be longer than three hours. Much of the material was rushed, as time did not permit going into the detail that I would have liked. When I teach this seminar again, I will have two three-hour sessions to make sure there is adequate time to cover all the material.

Secondly, the seminar needs to spend equal or close to equal time on evangelism as it does on Calvinism. There was a theme in the open-ended questions on the survey that many of the attenders would have liked to spend more time on evangelism and less time on Calvinism. This is a difficult problem to fix, as there are over twice as many passages that were used in chapter two to support the Calvinistic claims than to support evangelism. I think the best course of action is to not spend time on all the passages in chapter two used to support God's sovereignty, but rather to pick two or three to support that doctrine. That should alleviate some of the lack of time balance in the seminar.

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## **VITA**

Ryan Welsh was born December 11, 1982 in Nampa, ID. He received his Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies from Corban University in Salem, OR in 2005. He earned a Master of Divinity in 2009 from Western Seminary in Portland, OR. This project is in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA. Ryan began his studies at Gordon-Conwell in 2010 and anticipates graduating in January 2015.

Ryan has served as the Pastor of Preaching and Teaching at Grace Baptist Church in Newberg, OR and is also the founding Pastor of Mars Hill Church | Phoenix in Phoenix, AZ. Also, during Ryan's tenure at Mars Hill Church he served as the Pastor of Theology and Discipleship. He now leads Redeemer Church as the Preaching Pastor, which he planted in 2014 in Seattle, WA. He lives with his wife Kate and two children, Ella and Liam in Seattle, WA.